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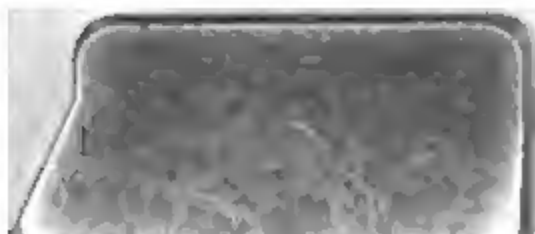
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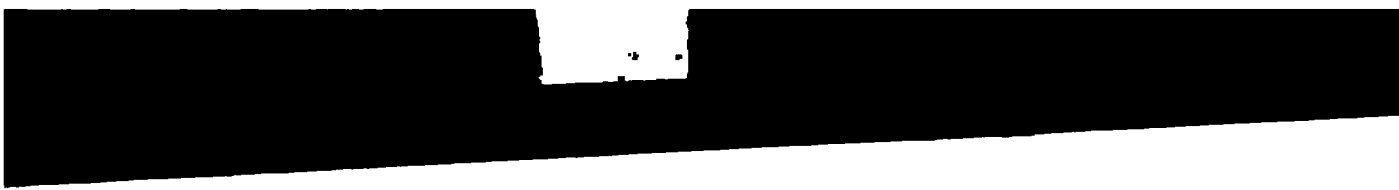
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CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

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VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

A TALE.



BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE."

I do no fors, I speke right as I mene.

CHAUCEER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1844.



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CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

CHAPTER I.

Thou mak'st a testament
As worldlings do, giving thy sum of more
To that which hath too much.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

“THEN you won't come to see me, Constance?” said her uncle Thornton.

“I must beg you to excuse me,” replied his niece, still keeping her eyes on her work.

“You won't?”

“If you persist in giving so rude a form to my denial, I *won't*,” she replied, half smiling.

“ You don't know what a fine place I have down in Herefordshire.”

“ I think I do : it is engraved in that new work of gentlemen's seats.”

“ Pshaw, the house ! I could make you very comfortable,” pursued the old gentleman, “ and I like you because you are so odd.”

“ For ten minutes, uncle,” said Constance looking up steadily in his face ; “ in ten days you would find my oddness clash with your own.”

“ And how do you know but I might leave you a fortune,” continued her uncle.

“ Fortune !” muttered Constance, half inaudibly ; but the flash of contempt which passed over her face was more intelligible than words.

“ Ay,” said her uncle sharply ; “ how are girls to expect to settle in these days without money ? And you, too, who have no beauty.”

“ I am very well aware I have no beauty,” said Constance, in a quiet tone.

“Something very like it though, now ;” said her uncle leaning back in his chair, and contemplating her as he would a picture ; “now, that I have made you angry.”

“Yes, angry,” replied Constance, “and with one of your sex, that is the bitterest reproach which can be addressed to a woman ; and you are not one from whom I will take reproaches.”

“I cannot think what makes you so inveterate against me,” said her uncle.

“You have not been kind to papa and mamma, that is all ;” replied Constance.

“Not given them money enough, I suppose ?”

“Not given them countenance enough ; little kindnesses—things that would have cost you nothing—”

“But trouble ;” grumbled uncle Thornton.

“Just so. For instance, a word from you would have obtained the cadetship for Harry, and you know how that matter has ended.”

“ In a curacy I suppose. Well, but then the trouble—I am not used to take any.”

“ And you have no right to expect it from others,” returned Constance. “ I have no particular wish to go into Herefordshire, and I will make no sacrifice for one who can make none in his turn.”

“ You are a very odd girl,” said her uncle, surveying her as if she were a natural curiosity.

“ Am I ?” said she folding up her work, “ I didn’t know it.”

“ Where are you going, Constance ?”

“ Into the green-house.”

“ Well, I don’t care if I come with you ; I have not seen your green-house.”

“ It is not worth seeing, you have better ones at Leyton ; and I really wish, uncle Thornton, you would not follow me about.”

While uncle Thornton is in the green-house, it may be as well to state that he was a single gentleman of very large fortune, and verging upon the convenient age of seventy-six. How many greedy eyes

were fixed upon his hoarded wealth may easily be supposed, now that in the course of nature he must so very soon relinquish it. Every attack of the gout was noted down in twenty tablets, and poor uncle Thornton's altered looks were made the source of hypocritical condolence by twenty trembling heirs expectant.

Of these, the most likely to succeed, and therefore, of course, the most distressed at any failing symptom, was one Mrs. Parker, his widowed sister, whose own means were so ample, that perhaps she was even less to be sympathised with than most of those miserable harpies who, to use the terms of one of our most expressive proverbs, 'look out for dead men's shoes.' She had a large family of her own, all established in wealthy mercantile concerns, except her second son, the fine gentleman of the family, who contrived by virtue of his office to run through a great deal of money, and who, being much more insolent to the old gentleman *than* occasion ever re-

quired, even the occasions of his goutiest exactions, was thought in a fair way to be the old man's heir.

In fact, he had Frederick Parker's picture painted and hung in the dining-room at Leyton after one of their stormiest quarrels, as if he really meant that one very happy day he should preside there as master in good earnest.

Mrs. Parker spent most of her time at Leyton ; her own villa at Fulham was damp, Leyton was agueish, but it never affected her.

If her brother was ordered to Cheltenham, she must escort him thither. If he went to see a friend, she had long owed the dear man a visit too, and could not let her brother go without her. Uncle Thornton was hardly ever out of her sight.

The fact was, that he did not much wish it ; there is in female attendance, however interested, or however scantily rendered, something so soothing to an invalid, so absolutely essential, that he was well con-

tented to carry sister Parker about with him as head-nurse, and looked upon the pensioning her off handsomely at his death, as an act of justice which must be rendered to her in common with his other and more regularly enlisted menials.

How, indeed, he ever would have the assurance to sit down, and in her very presence concoct a will, wherein sister Parker's name should not figure in capital letters, was something that she could not comprehend, and with her good guardianship should never happen.

The only person who felt no interest in the disposition of his property was Mrs. D'Oyley, the mother of Constance, his youngest niece, who having early offended him by her marriage with a poor curate, had quietly submitted to almost a total estrangement from her uncle; and taking it for granted that she should not benefit by his death, was perhaps the only one among his numerous relatives who really took pleasure in seeing him alive.

A sort of reconciliation had been patched up between them. Mr. D'Oyley had been presented by his patron, the Earl of Bevis, to an excellent living. There were but three children to diminish his income, and they lived in comfort and some elegance; so uncle Thornton, finding himself in their neighbourhood, had left his Argus for a single night and had dined and slept at the rectory. Mrs. Parker was to bring the carriage for him in the course of the morning, and in the meantime he was bestowing his tediousness upon his great niece, Constance.

Mr. D'Oyley was a finished gentleman, and had welcomed his guest with due politeness. Mrs. D'Oyley received him with more warmth, she recognised those ties of relationship that it takes so much to obliterate; but Constance, who despised her uncle from her heart, and deeply resented his neglect of her parents, hardly vouchsafed him a word uncalled for, and put the most decided negative upon his friendly advan-

ces ; and yet he had taken a violent fancy to her,

Thus runs the world away.

“ Well, this is a pretty little greenhouse,” said Mr. Thornton.

“ Scarcely room to move, you see,” said Constance as she brushed past him ; “ I beg your pardon, I must reach this rose-tree.”

“ What ! are you going to gather the only rose in your collection ?”

“ I am, indeed ; it is my tree though,” said Constance, laughing.

“ Why, what can you want with so choice a nosegay ?”

“ We are going to a party to-night.”

“ Any thing particular ?”

“ No, only just our own neighbourhood.”

“ And so you are resolved to make yourself very smart ?”

“ This is not for me,” returned Constance. “ I am making up mamma’s bouquet ; she is so fond of flowers.”

Uncle Thornton stood for a few moments silent ; he almost envied Mrs. D'Oyley a daughter who attended to her fancies without their being expressed.

“ Suppose I stay over to-night, and so prevent your going to your party,” said Mr. Thornton.

“ Why, in that case mamma might think it civil to remain at home with you, but I should certainly keep my engagement with Mrs. Manley.”

“ You could not go alone !”

“ Oh, this is not like London,” said Constance, cutting off a sprig of flowering myrtle with her rose-scissors ; “ nobody would be shocked at seeing me come unattended into a room.”

“ Those are very curious scissors,” said her uncle ; “ let me look at them, I never saw any before.”

“ Made for gathering flowers, you know,” said Constance.

“ Where do you get them ?” asked uncle Thornton.

Constance read the name of the maker on the handle.

Any one other of Mr. Thornton's relatives would have prayed him to accept the novelty, but Constance never dreamed of making a present to so rich a man ; particularly by way of conciliation.

" They were given to me," added Constance.

" Here comes your mamma," said Mr. Thornton advancing to meet her, " now I will tell her how you have been using me."

" Oh, pray don't, uncle," cried Constance, affecting to be frightened.

" What do you think, Mrs. D'Oyley," said Mr. Thornton, " I have been using all my eloquence with your daughter to make her accept an invitation to my house, and in vain."

" I am sure you are very kind, uncle," said Mrs. D'Oyley in a hesitating voice ; she was, with all her disinterestedness, not quite so blind to the probable advantages as her daughter was.

“ The idea !” cried Constance, her eyes filling with tears, “ to leave papa and mamma for the sake of staying with Mr. Thornton !”

“ What do you say to it, Mrs. D'Oyley ?” asked Mr. Thornton.

“ We thank you very much, my dear uncle, for thinking of such a thing,” said Mrs. D'Oyley ; “ but this is a case which we should leave entirely to the decision of Constance.”

Mr. Thornton looked round for her ; she was seated on one of the low flower-stands making up a nosegay, perfectly secure that the matter was in her own hands, and, therefore, that the case stood as she had before arranged it with her uncle. At this moment the gate bell rang.

“ There !” said uncle Thornton, “ there is old mother Parker come to fetch me away ; you need not go in to see her, I'll say good-bye here. If ever your want anything, why ask me for it ; so good-bye, my dear.”

“ Good-bye, uncle,” said Constance, as he left the green-house in company with her mother.

“ Well,” said she to herself ; “ I should like very much to know the meaning of all this, ‘ the English of it,’ as Harry says. I declare I have been very ungracious to Mr. Thornton ; I never was so rude to any one before ; but then he has behaved so shockingly to papa and mamma : at least, I will never go to stay with him. Forgive as much as you please, but still keep out of the way of people who insult you. Now, if that tiresome Cape-jessamine were but blown, mamma would have as choice a bouquet as Lady Hernshaw, with all her conservatories. Now some thread to tie it with, and my rose-scissors ; why,” cried Constance raising her laughing face from a long and ineffectual search, “ I do believe my wicked uncle Thornton has abstracted them !”

CHAPTER II.

And of a truth she was of great disport ;
Pleasant to all, and amiable of port.
It gave her pain to counterfeit the ways
Of court, its stately manner and displays ;
And to be held in distant reverence.

CHAUCER.

It was a very select neighbourhood. Sir George and Lady Hernshaw were first on the list. Sir George had made a great deal of money in some fortunate speculations ; Lady Hernshaw was clever, insolent, and well connected ; everybody looked up to her.

The village was made up of a sprinkling of gentlemen's houses, scarcely deserving the name of seats, and a great abundance of cottages ; but none of those little boxes with green verandahs and painted

iron railings, which disfigure the approaches to London, and indeed to most of our country towns.

The neighbourhood did not recognise the existence of any person living in, or very near, the country town which was within two miles of their own village. Not that they themselves were many degrees less vulgar than such people; for among them there was very nearly as much reliance on externals, quite as much love of paltry mischief and wholesale scandal, as might be found in the narrowest street of the aforementioned town. There was by no means an immaculate freedom from ledger and counter in the very highest of these exclusives; and, moreover, many of the townspeople kept a better carriage and dressed in richer satins than the *élite* of the village. It was habit: you cannot break into the charmed circle; you must be born there.

Mrs. Manley was a widow lady with two daughters; Mrs. Dyce a widow with three, but her second was married, in which par-

ticular she had, and felt she had, an advantage over Mrs. Manley. Each lady boasted a son. Mrs. Manley's was an invalid who could not walk down stairs without trembling; Mrs. Dyce's, a gentleman of spirit, who ran through a great deal more money than his mother found it pleasant to pay. Then there were the Brownings, whose family circle, once very large, consisted now of an eccentric old father, two single daughters, both a little declining into the sear, the yellow leaf, and one grandson, as hopeful a youth as ever was sent to sea by his desperate relatives.

It was evening, and Mrs. Manley's drawing-room was in full toilet for the reception of her visitors; chairs uncovered, tables neatly arranged, every thing, in fact, gloriously uncomfortable.

The Miss Brownings had arrived—daring, unpleasant women, who put up their glass to every man they passed in the road, stared him into blushes, or if that were impossible, fairly stared him down, and then

turned and laughed to each other. They were the sort of women who abused old maids, always begged their friends to have men enough at their parties, and who had laughed, flirted, and waltzed thirty years to no purpose. Miss Dyce next made her appearance with her mother, both sensible women, and in great favour with their hostess.

"But where is dear Louisa?" asked Mrs. Manley as Mrs. Dyce took her seat on the sofa beside her.

"Only confined to the house with one of her tedious colds," said Mrs. Dyce. "She regretted very much not being able to venture here."

"She reads too much, my dear Mrs. Dyce," said Mrs. Manley.

"She does too much of every thing," said Miss Dyce. "But advice is wasted on these energetic people."

Miss Browning took up her eye-glass, and having ascertained, by a very comprehensive stare, that she was dressed in a

very good black satin, and that it was trimmed with very good black lace, she dropped it again, and listened.

“Do you expect Lady Hernshaw to-night?” asked Mrs. Dyce.

“Oh, yes,” said Mrs. Manley; “she will come when the evening is half over, and declare she hurried dinner to be here so soon; then hasten home again with her handsome daughter, on pretence of another engagement.”

“Do you call that girl handsome, mamma?” exclaimed Miss Manley.

“The men call her so,” returned Miss Browning, in a tone that it would have been dangerous to dispute.

“The gentlemen are below with Francis,” said Mrs. Manley. “You know, unless one asks them to dinner, one can never secure them for one’s evening parties.”

“You are quite right,” said Miss Browning. “I say what I think; and parties without men are detestable.”

"A good many young ladies are of your opinion, my dear," said Mrs. Manley, laughing.

"By the by, my dear Mrs. Manley," said Mrs. Dyce, "have you heard that young Mr. Forde has returned to England?"

"Ay," said Miss Browning, "the old man is dead at last."

"Well, but," said Mrs. Dyce, "I wonder if he intends to reside in the neighbourhood. Such a beautiful house, so finely furnished! Poor old Mr. Forde never lived to enjoy his work. I wonder where the young man is now?"

"In the dining-room," said Mrs. Manley with an air of great indifference. "The gentlemen will be up presently."

"Mr. Forde in your dining-room!" said Mrs. Dyce with unequivocal surprise.

"Yes; he and Francis were great friends before he went abroad you know."

Mrs. Dyce did not know it.

"So of course we asked him here as soon as we knew he had returned."

The young ladies looked at each other. Mrs. Manley had secured the first move; but they flattered themselves they were not indifferent players.

Lady Hernshaw and her daughter were announced; Sir George, as usual, engaged; the mother, richly dressed, highly rouged, sparkling with a most needless profusion of jewels; her beautiful daughter in the native brilliancy of her own charms, fairly eclipsing her imposing appearance. Every body said they were delighted to see Miss Hernshaw, and everybody devoutly wished her out of the way; for they could not disguise from themselves the fact that no one of them was likely to be looked at while Miss Hernshaw was in the room.

“Constance not here!” said Miss Hernshaw looking round when the party had subsided into quiet after their reception.

“Oh, she will be here soon enough,” said the younger Miss Browning; “such a disagreeable girl!”

“Such a charming girl, I think!” said Miss Hernshaw.

Every one echoed Miss Hernshaw's exclamation. Henrietta Browning found herself in the minority; for Constance was peculiarly gracious in her manners to every body except uncle Thornton; and—she was not admired by the gentlemen.

The Miss Manleys were now called upon to explain what Mr. Forde was like. Miss Browning asked if he would be a good partner at a ball. Miss Dyce begged to know whether he appeared sensible. Miss Hernshaw, laughing, hoped that he dressed well; and Henrietta, from the other side of the room, expressed her opinion that if he could not take a second decently in their duets, the man would not be worth a rush to any of them.

Before Miss Manley could reply to these inquiries, Mr. Forde made his appearance in company with the other gentlemen. The Manleys and Brownings contrived to surround him. Miss Manley had a little song

in an Italian dialect, and she was dying to know whether it was Venetian or Genoese. Miss Browning wanted to know the exact size of the Scala, and likewise whether he read music from the clef.

The moment he entered, Lady Hernshaw, by a glance of the eye, imperceptible except to the initiated, made it evident to Isabel that Mr. Forde was not a person to be sought or even attended to more than the merest civility required.

However, Miss Hernshaw was too much of a professed beauty not to feel surprised that a stranger should be three minutes in her presence without displaying an inclination to place himself at her feet. Mr. Forde appeared to her both handsome and intelligent, and she was fond of conquest. She was very much above the vulgarity of directly appealing to his attention ; but she was looking at some medallions, and found herself unable to read one of the inscriptions. She asked Mr. Dyce for a magnifying glass.

Upon his honour he had not the least idea where one was to be found.

Did nobody wear an eye-glass? How provoking! She must trouble Mr. Manley to go and ask her mamma for her reading-glasses.

Mr. Manley, shaking very much, did as he was bid; but Lady Hernshaw had come out without them.

Of course by this time there was some confusion in the room. Mr. Dyce held the medallion up to the candle till it was smoked, in the vain hope of reading the letters; he said they were Greek, and gave them over to a young clergyman who was present. The clergyman declared the inscription to be illegible, and passed the medallion on to Mr. Forde. He looked at it for a moment, and then coming up to Miss Hernshaw, said he was sorry to disappoint her, but he believed there was no inscription at all, merely a wreath of acanthus leaves very nearly obliterated, which ran round the edge of the medal.

Miss Hernshaw protested that she had given a great deal of trouble, and then sat looking at the medallion, and seeming unconscious of the presence of Mr. Forde, who had taken a chair by her side.

At last she laid it down, and said easily by way of beginning :

“ And how long is it since you returned from Naples ? ”

“ About three weeks : but I only came down to Elmsforde yesterday,” he replied.

“ I suppose you know the place and the people as well as we do. I forget whether you resided here ? ” said Miss Hernshaw carelessly.

“ I spent the holidays here when I was a boy. But then we settled in London, and afterwards at Naples, so that every one has grown quite out of my remembrance.”

“ Except the old people,” said Isabel.

“ No, I assure you ! A dozen or so more wrinkles are quite sufficient to include them in my rule of forgetfulness. But I see you

looking towards the door as if you were in anticipation of some delightful arrival. Some lion, I dare say! Is it to be poet, painter, or traveller?"

"Nay," said Isabel laughing, "one traveller in a party is enough."

"But you do not dignify my poor peregrinations by such a title? A traveller ought to have penetrated to Cochin-China at the very least. I hope that when you run over to Paris for a new bonnet, you do not imagine that you are actually travelling?"

"Something very like it!" said Isabel. "Do you know last year our carriage got behind a post-chaise bearing home some dead lady; and we had to creep a hundred miles at a foot-pace, because it was out of rule to pass by *La Morte*."

"But that was only a bore, not an adventure," said Mr. Forde. "A horde of Tartars now pulling your carriage to pieces, and tumbling out your ball-dresses

on the sand would have been a thing to remember."

"Oh ! thank you, I have no passion for such scenes," replied Miss Hernshaw ; "but I am looking out for my friend Constance D'Oyley. I suppose she is one of those who have the misfortune to escape your recollection ?"

"Let me see," said Mr. Forde, "Mr. D'Oyley was rector here before we left ; but Miss D'Oyley might have been in her cradle or her teens for any thing I knew of her. I shall be delighted to hear her description from you."

"A hand-bill description ? Dark grey eyes, brown hair, fine teeth ! A little above the middle height, and so on !"

"No ; I would rather hear the terms on which you consent to call her your friend."

"Oh ! that is a much easier task ; simply because she is so odd."

"That is not, I confess, a very prepossessing attribute."

“Not to you, I dare say!” replied Miss Hernshaw. “But you need not expect to see a Madge Wildfire make her appearance. Her ideas are odd; but neither is her dress nor her person.”

“Then perhaps *original* would be a better term?”

“I think my own term the best. There are several originals now in the room: but Constance is singular—so disinterested.”

“Is that odd?” asked Mr. Forde smiling.

“Very—very!” replied Miss Hernshaw with emphasis.

The discussion was interrupted by the entrance of Constance with her mother. Mr. Forde’s curiosity was so far raised as to pay particular attention to Miss D’Oyley’s manner and appearance.

She was, as her friend had said, rather above the middle height, of a singularly fine form, which contributed to make her movements graceful and expressive. Her nut-brown hair was parted back almost to the ears, and then fell in profuse clusters

of heavy curls. At the back of the head her soft thick tresses were wound into a large knot, so low as almost to touch the neck. Her brows and eyes were beautiful; the brow, a projecting edge of brown, finely traced, and a little darker than the hair; and the eyes of that soft slate colour, so puzzling by candlelight, so expressive under any circumstances. Nothing could exceed the simplicity of her dress; a pale blue silk with a close fitting boddice and sleeves, unadorned by any sort of trinket.

There was something remarkably pleasing in her manner. Yet her tone, her mode of address, her very smile varied to every person she spoke to. She was so natural, that her aspect was entirely under the control of her feelings. And then her walk, her mode of shaking hands, the very turn of her head was so easy, so different from those young ladies who act always with the hope of a husband before their eyes.

Having spoken to all the ladies, and bowed just perceptibly to the gentlemen

on the hearth-rug, Constance made her way over to Miss Hernshaw and glided into a seat by her side.

“Odd?” thought Mr. Forde. “I would swear I never saw anything less odd in my life.”

“So you have found your way to me at last?” said Isabel as they shook hands.

“Did you not think me very quick?” asked Constance. “Recollect I have despatched Mrs. Manley and both the Brownings.”

“True! What was Miss Browning saying to you?”

“Oh!” replied Constance, “she only asked me the price of my gown.”

“Did you tell her?”

“I could not. I remembered what it was a yard, but I had not time to add it up.”

Mr. Forde, who had sat by silently, laughed; Constance turned round, and seeing a person whom she did not know, turned back again to her friend.

“I will tell you where you may borrow

a Holinshed," said she, "if you still wish to read the account of the real de Lacey, Scott's Constable of Chester."

"Yes, I know. I wish it of all things."

"I asked papa and he said Mr. Browning had one—a real old edition."

"I wonder how he came by it;" said Isabel. "I shall borrow it and make him leave it to me in his will. And talking of wills, I hear that your old uncle has been to visit you."

"Talking of rheumatism or wrinkles," said Constance laughing, "but wills are the last things I should talk of in connexion with uncle Thornton. His last will and testament has been declared very plainly a long time."

"A wicked will," said Isabel, "if it is to prevent you from receiving a handsome share of the old man's property."

"I have not earned it," replied Constance smiling.

"Are the ladies about here musical?" asked Mr. Forde of Miss Hernshaw.

“Yes, very!” replied Isabel.

“And you?”

“Of course. I do all in my power to promote the discord. I wish you could see yourself, my dear Constance, whenever music is mentioned; you always make a face like a person afflicted with tooth-ache.”

“Do I?” said Constance, turning round to the looking-glass.

“Do you not like music?” asked Mr. Forde.

“Some music, and sometimes,” said Constance; “but I don’t know a greater penance than to be obliged to play when one is not in the humour for it.”

“You will never be a woman of the world,” said Isabel; “you let all your moods be seen.”

“No, never!” returned Constance very contentedly.

Music began; a whist party was forming—there were more than enough players, and another table was to be made up;

then, of course, one more player was wanted.

"Do have pity on them, Constance," said Isabel.

"You know that I cannot play," she replied.

"But learn, then. They always volunteer to teach a recruit."

"Oh, no ! I have a horror of cards."

"But what is your objection ?"

"I can hardly explain it. You know Kean said he never felt degraded except when he had on his Harlequin's jacket. Now I have just that feeling with a pack of cards in my hand."

"The fact is, you think them too trifling."

"That cannot be," said Constance laughing, "for I am very fond of playing at dominoes."

Mr. Forde went to the hostess and procured a box of dominoes. He brought them to Constance and challenged her to play.

She took Miss Hernshaw into her counsels, and opposed Mr. Forde. The game was only an excuse for a great deal of lively conversation. In the midst of some laughable description which Mr. Forde was giving them of Anglo-Neapolitan society of the second class, Miss Hernshaw caught her mother's eye fixed on her's—a slight sign passed between them.

“ Ah !” said she rising, “ mamma wants me to fasten that troublesome bracelet of her's ; the Venice clasp, Constance, which no one can manage but myself. You must finish without my assistance.”

“ I think I shall not finish at all,” said Constance as her friend left her ; “ I have nothing but bad numbers left.”

“ But is it not very cruel in you to give me no chance of victory ?” asked Mr. Forde.

Constance laughed, and began mixing the dominoes.

They then fell into a conversation upon the antiquity of games, and from that to

the fine fragment of Greek boys at the British Museum, quarrelling over the game of knuckle-bones.

“Are you not talking of something very learned?” asked Miss Dyce, who now joined them.

“Profoundly so!” replied Mr. Forde.

“I thought I heard something about the Greeks. Are you a Philo-Hellenist, Mr. Forde?” asked the lady.

Constance surrendered her seat to Miss Dyce, and went in search of her mother.

Mrs. D'Oyley was talking to Lady Hernshaw; Miss Hernshaw was at the piano with Mr. Dyce and two or three other gentlemen surrounding her.

“My dearest Constance,” said her Ladyship, “would you be so very kind as to remind my foolish Isabel that she is singing a great deal too much this evening. She should recollect Dr. Grove's injunctions about her chest.”

Constance went directly; not that she supposed Lady Hernshaw to be anxious

about her daughter's health, but she knew well enough it was that lady's manner of dismissing a troublesome listener.

Isabel left off in the middle of a song, but she complied with the entreaties of the gentlemen that she would remain at the piano, and began playing a fantasia by Hertz. Meantime, Constance sat down alone, in order that she might listen to the music. She was presently joined by Mr. Forde, who complained of her unkindness in making her escape from him when he was particularly in want of her assistance.

“But for what?” asked Constance.

“To defend these Turks. I have defended the Greek cause so often that I took up the Turkish side by way of variety, and of course had very little to say for it.”

“And I am sure I would have given you no assistance,” said Constance. “But have you ever studied the law, that you are ready to plead both sides of a cause?”

“No,” said Mr. Forde; “I have the real misfortune to be without a profession.”

Constance thought it a misfortune too, but she said nothing.

“But I sought you from a very interested motive,” continued her companion. “I have been hearing the wildest story imaginable; the history of a Lord Somebody, who lives the life of a recluse in this neighbourhood; turns night into day, and performs such wonders!”

“Oh! you mean Lord Bevis,” said Constance. “Yes, it is generally believed that he is deformed, for he is never seen. He literally does turn night into day; rises in the evening and goes to bed at dawn; and rides out like other people when every body else is fast asleep.”

“So I have just heard. But I am told that I might hear a great many more particulars of this curious being if you chose to be communicative.”

“You think so because papa visits him

from time to time. His father, you know, gave papa the living. Do own now that you are quite as anxious to 'pluck out the heart of my mystery,' though you are a man, as any woman that ever lived."

"Then, will you tell me all you know of Lord Bevis?"

"I will, provided you confess."

"Well, then, *confiteor*: now, what do you know?"

"Absolutely nothing," said Constance, her whole face radiant with laughter. "I am so sorry, but papa gives us no account of his visits."

"And are you so devoid of curiosity?"

"I really don't wish to know exactly how deformed Lord Bevis is. I imagine it is to an extent that injures his health, or he would never shut himself up as he does. Papa regrets it, I know. He thinks it incompatible with the duties of so rich a man; but he has some factotum, a trusty

servant who does wonders for him. I suppose he is religious, from his having papa to visit him ; but you see I have no certain information, it is all supposition."

" And you have never extorted from Mr. D'Oyley a full-length portrait of this man ?"

" No," said Constance ; " for I agree with papa that he is the last person who should infringe the intentions of his solitude ; if he secludes himself that he may conceal the accident of his birth, papa should be careful not to expose his secret ; but, indeed, I do not know that he is deformed, it may be eccentricity that leads him to live alone."

Mr. Forde said something about an excess of heroism.

" No, do oblige me," said Constance, " by believing that a little more is required to make a hero than the mere absence of an unfeeling curiosity."

" Still," Mr. Forde began—

" Still," said Constance, rising, " you

have half made up your mind to storm this poor man's castle and possess yourself by force of his secret."

"Are you going?" said Mr. Forde with an expression of regret, "I hope that when I do myself the honour of returning Mr. D'Oyley's visit, I shall not find you as inaccessible as Lord Bevis."

"I don't know," said Constance, gaily, "I am all over the village every morning."

"What, among the poor people?"

"Sometimes; I go about a great deal with papa."

Having made their adieux, Constance and her mother left the room, and on reaching the hall they found Mr. Forde had followed them down stairs.

"Why, you are not going to walk?" said he.

"Oh, yes we are!" said Constance, tying on her bonnet; "and you came down to hand us into a fine carriage with four prancing horses; and in that case, the rectory is so close, that the horses' heads

would be at home while we were stepping into the carriage here."

"But I hope you will allow me to walk home with you?" said Mr. Forde offering his arm to Mrs. D'Oyley. She assured him that there was not the slightest occasion, and so forth, but he insisted and gained his point. He offered his other arm to Constance, but she dropped behind, saying "that she wished to have the full benefit of the lantern which the little foot-boy was carrying." He could hear her keeping up a conversation with the boy as they went along.

"Lantern a little lower, Tim, I am looking out for the black-beetles."

"No fear of them, Miss, they are flown out a long time."

"So, Tim, you got quite safe to Lady Hernshaw's?"

"Yes, Miss."

"No robbers in that dark corner by the mill-stream?"

"Oh, no! Miss."

“That’s well ; though I have no money in my pocket, have you ?”

“Yes, Miss,” said Tim, looking stealthily round.

“Indeed ; any ghosts out to-night ?”

“No, Miss,” said Tim, walking a little closer to his young mistress.

“You looked well under the great yew tree as you came along ?”

“I ran past it, Miss.”

“Why was that ? Did you see anything white creeping along the churchyard ?”

“No, Miss,” said Tim, flying to the door and relieving his mind by a furious application of the knocker.

Mrs. D'Oyley and Mr. Forde were standing on the steps laughing.

“I suppose you are laughing at me,” said Constance ; “but Tim is a *protégé* of mine. I never let my brothers tease or frighten him, preferring to carry on that branch of his education myself. Do you know that you have come out without your hat ? Entirely a matter of taste ! only if you

were to take your death of cold, don't you think mamma and I should have some reason to reproach ourselves? Are you afraid of ghosts? I shall be very happy to lend you Tim back to Lady Hernshaw's;—good night."

"Well, Miss Constance," said Mrs. D'Oyley, smiling, as they were parting for the night; "I think you have been flirting this evening at a great rate."

"Was that flirting, mamma?" said Constance taking up her candle, "I did not know it was anything half so agreeable."

CHAPTER III.

GLO'STER.—Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

ANNE.—To take is not to give.

RICHARD III.

It was just two days after the tea-party at Mrs. Manley's, that Constance and her mother were talking and working in the drawing-room at the rectory, when a letter came in for Constance and a small parcel for Mrs. D'Oyley.

“Why surely, that little square packet never came by the post?” said Constance.

“No, my dear, the postman brought it from the town as it was so small.”

“Very gracious of him! This is from Edgar; hopes we are well—particularly your cold: wants two pair of gloves and

a cake — asks if we have read the last number of Nicholas Nickleby ; and says it wants only five weeks to the holidays. There, mamma, did you ever see anything so like copper-plate as that boy's hand ?”

“ No, my dear, it is beautiful. But now for my letter which is from uncle Thornton. He apologizes to you for having stolen your scissors, and begs that you will accept in return the enclosed remembrance.”

“ Oh, mamma ! what a beautiful seal-ring. A sapphire ! I am sure I shall do no such thing. Accept a present of such value from a person I dislike ?”

“ A relation, Constance ! Oh, my dear, it would never do to refuse it.”

“ And then to have to write a letter of thanks,” said Constance in a mournful voice. “ I am sure I have a mind to ask for my scissors back again, and say I do not want his ring. I dare say it cost twenty guineas.”

“ A mere trifle to him, my dear ; and it is neither kind nor wise to reject his

friendly advances. He may be of use to your brothers if he lives."

"He might have been," said Constance, colouring, "if he had chosen to exert himself for Harry; the only favour, too, you ever asked."

"Well, my dear, that is past and gone, and Harry is with us instead of being in India, recollect that."

"Yes, preparing for a profession he dislikes—the church too! Mamma, I hate uncle Thornton!" said Constance starting from her chair and throwing the ring across the table.

"My dear, dear Constance," said Mrs. D'Oyley gently.

"I am sure, mamma," said Constance running up to her, "that I did not mean to say anything wicked; only if anything happen to Harry, if he ever turn out what we do not wish, I shall lay all the blame on Mr. Thornton. But I will keep the ring and write the letter, and do anything rather than vex you."

Mrs. D'Oyley kissed her affectionately, and Constance sat down to her desk.

“ There now ! ” she exclaimed as the bell rang. “ Somebody coming to call just as I had found out how to begin ! I forget now ! Something very brilliant driven out of my head ! But I will go into the dining-room, and leave you to entertain the company.”

So saying, she lifted her little desk in her arms, and was leaving the room when the servant threw open the door and announced Mr. Forde. Constance stood still, and turning her head round, smiled and lifted her eyebrows with a little comic expression of vexation. Mr. Forde having hastily spoken to Mrs. D'Oyley, came forward and relieved her of her burden.

“ Thank you,” said Constance. “ If it had been one of my neighbours I could have done no less than faint at being caught in the fact : but strangers are different.”

“ What fact ? ” asked Mr. Forde.

“ Making my escape when the bell rang,

to finish a letter, or rather begin one. What, have you been absent from England so long, that you forget that very common habit?—one I am sure you must have often indulged in; for men generally manage to escape morning visitors.”

“ You see I am not polite enough to hope that I may not detain you from your letters,” said Mr. Forde, “ simply because I hope no such thing.”

“ They are as well put off,” said Constance ; “ for I am in a very stupid frame of mind this morning, and willing to bestow my tediousness, ‘ an ’twere a thousand times more than ’tis,’ upon any one rather than my correspondent.”

“ Is it possible that Miss D'Oyley can ever be tedious ?”

“ You shall have proof,” said Constance. “ It is a very fine day.”

“ But it rained in the night,” said Mr. Forde.

“ True, the weather is very unsettled at this time of the year,” returned Constance.

“ The rain does a great deal of good,” remarked Mr. Forde.

“ Yes, to the turnips.”

“ But the hay will be spoiled.”

“ I am afraid so. Have you much hay ?”

“ I should have—”

“ If it was not for the bad weather.”

“ Exactly so.”

“ Now is not that a real English conversation ?” said Constance, laughing. “ Then come politics, then the choicest bit of scandal current, told of course with a very dejected face, and then good morning, and it is high time too.”

“ And this was what you were running away from just now.”

“ Yes. Don't you think I was fully justified in doing so ?”

“ I will allow it,” said Mr. Forde, “ as you did not carry your point.”

He then addressed himself to Mrs. D'Oyley ; but at every sentence she noticed, with some amusement, that he turned to

Constance as if anxious that she would join the conversation.

“ Do you know, Miss D'Oyley,” said he, at last, “ that I heard of you at Malta.”

“ Indeed ! something very good, I hope, to travel such a long way.”

“ I heard from a friend that Miss D'Oyley was so silent that it was impossible to make her speak.”

“ How many friends have you, Mr. Forde ?” asked Constance.

“ How many ? I could not count them, without—”

“ Ay, I understand ; you have so many that you have not one. Now I have one friend, and nobody need expect to have more in a whole life-time.”

“ And who is this friend ?”

“ Isabel Hernshaw.”

“ Friendship is out of fashion except with young ladies,” said Mr Forde.

“ Yes,” returned Constance, quickly, “ you need not tell me that every thing good is going out of fashion, except among

women. What are you laughing at? Friendship, or my defence of it?"

"Oh! pray give me a definition of friendship," said Mr. Forde.

"No; that would be shewing a blind man colours."

"But I really have a friend."

"Then you do not want a definition. What were we talking of? Something very interesting! Oh! about *me*! Your friend said I would not talk; but that must have been a long while ago when I was afflicted with a complaint called shyness; you may have heard of such a thing."

"Don't you give me credit for having often suffered from it?" asked Mr. Forde.

"No."

"I am overpowered with it at this moment. I am wishing very much to ask you to sing, and yet it is such a piece of presumption in the morning that I cannot muster courage."

"I never encourage presumption," said Constance gaily. "And there, in good

time, is a ring at the bell ! Some one else coming to interrupt me ! Oh, my letters !”

“ I was the first aggressor,” remarked Mr. Forde.

“ You don't look at all sorry for it,” said Constance.

“ How can I ?” he replied with much meaning.

Lady Hernshaw and her daughter were announced, and at the same time Mr. Forde took leave. Constance thought her Ladyship very supercilious in her manner towards him ; but then his father had been a merchant, and he himself derived a considerable part of his large income from some commercial house.

“ I did not know you were so intimate with Mr. Forde,” was the first thing Isabel said.

“ Nor are we,” said Constance ; “ this is his first visit.”

“ I thought he seemed on such very familiar terms,” said Isabel.

“ All the fault of his manner, I sup-

pose," replied Constance. "You see we did not shake hands."

"You never do with gentlemen, my dear Constance," said Isabel.

"How is Lord Bevis?" asked Lady Hernshaw in a voice of interest.

"In his usual health," said Mrs. D'Oyley. "Mr. D'Oyley was with him yesterday evening."

"What a pity, my dear Mrs. D'Oyley, that he persists in so strange a seclusion. Have you any idea whether there is any—"

Mrs. D'Oyley could not supply the blank.

"Any—madness in—"

"Not that I am aware of," replied Mrs. D'Oyley.

I will not say in what terms Lady Hernshaw privately denounced Mrs. D'Oyley's want of communicativeness, but she changed the subject immediately.

"By the bye, my dear Mrs. D'Oyley, what a sad young man that Mr. Forde is. I took care not to be at home when he

returned Sir George's call. A whole family of children at Elmsforde, I understand ?

“ Oh ! his sister's children, Mrs. Langley's. I recollect Mr. D'Oyley mentioning them, and he said they were beautiful creatures,” replied Mrs. D'Oyley.

“ Cherubs, no doubt,” said Lady Hershaw, looking thunder at so decisive a check-mate to her new bit of scandal. “ Isabel, my dear, we have been paying quite a visitation to poor Mrs. D'Oyley. Constance, love, you must see about getting up your good looks again now that we have so many beaux in the neighbourhood.”

CHAPTER IV.

The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.

MILTON.

TIME passed on : May with its cold winds and dismal rainy days, which, however, did contrive by some means to bring out the trees in all the brilliant and tender verdure that seldom survives that month. The halcyon days, which our elder poets describe, steeping their verses in the fresh odours and the warm sunlight of May are now held to be poetical imaginings ; and by *poetical*, people mean *false* and not *true*, which is the real meaning, as it is the deep, exhaustless heart of poetry.

From time to time, indeed more frequently than was consistent with etiquette,

Mr. Forde found his way along the green lanes which led from his house to the rectory. At every visit he became more enchanted with the easy kindness, the singular integrity of character apparent in the disposition of Constance. For herself, she treated him with an ease so nearly approaching to unconcern as to be anything but encouraging: the most delightful footing for an acquaintance, but perplexing enough to a man who was as nearly as possible a lover !

It was the end of May. Edgar had been sent home a few weeks before the holidays with a troublesome cough, which a little careful home management had brought under ; and a fine warm morning had tempted him and Constance into the garden to set their own peculiar flower-beds thoroughly to rights. Edgar, soon tired of work, sat on the edge of the wheel-barrow talking ; Constance, more indefatigable, was tying up, and cutting, and planting, with great perseverance, not taking particular care,

when she had a handful of rubbish, to avoid throwing them on her brother, but letting him have an even chance with the wheelbarrow.

“These carnations, Edgar; oh! do get me a couple of those green sticks from the shelf in the green-house. Thank you; these are the finest in the whole parish. Lady Hernshaw has nothing like them.”

“Lady Hernshaw paints, doesn't she?” said Edgar.

“Oh, ladies never paint!” said Constance making a very long face. “Do you think these slips of jessamine would grow?”

“Not at this time of year. Do you know, at our school, the boys had a feast the night before I came home, up in the bed-rooms.”

“And you all got tipsy, I suppose?”

“I believe you; at least *I* did.”

“So good for your cough that was—so like a gentleman too? I heard of an old

man who had once been made tipsy at Eton, and who was so disgusted with himself, that as long as he lived he never touched a drop of wine again. That was a *man*, now !”

Edgar murmured some indistinct remark to the effect that that old gentleman must have been a simpleton, and then changed discourse.

“ Oh look, Constance !” he said, standing on tiptoe that he might see over the shrubs, “ what beautiful action that chestnut horse has. If that horse was but mine—”

“ You would break your neck at once, instead of keeping us in daily expectation of that lamentable catastrophe.”

“ Do you know who it is ?”

“ The rider is Mr. Forde ; I have never been introduced to the chestnut horse.”

“ What sort of a fellow is Mr. Forde ?”

“ You will see for yourself most likely. He is coming hither, I dare say.”

“ What is he coming for ?”

“Not to rob the hen-roost, nor inspect the locks that he may head a house-breaking party at night, nor to eat a certain ravenous boy's share of luncheon, nor to—”

“Be quiet, Constance!”

“Well, I am quite tired now. I shall go in doors and leave you to make every thing neat before you follow me.”

She was just going up the steps when Mr. Forde, catching sight of her as he dismounted at the hall-door, came out to meet her. Edgar looked up at him and liking the fashion of his spurs and riding-whip, set him down for a very good fellow indeed.

“I am going in doors,” said Constance.

“So am I then,” replied Mr. Forde, turning back with her.

“Papa is in his study,” said Constance, pushing open the door as she passed on to the drawing-room.

Mr. Forde went in much against his will, and after a few minutes' conversation

with Mr. D'Oyley, rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room. Constance was making up a parcel for Edgar to carry over to her cousins, the Hiltons, who lived a few miles off.

"There, Edgar, that is the edition of Milton's smaller poems—to think of Mary never having read them—and that the first volume of the Huguenot. Now, if you drop these books—"

"Oh, no fear of that, Constance."

"You naughty little boy, look at your gloves. Give them to me—what disgraceful holes!"

"Oh! I can't wait!"

"Can't wait, ungrateful little creature!" said Constance, sewing very fast. "Do you think you are going to uncle Hilton's like a workhouse boy in these rags? Take your hat off, and sit down."

Mr. Forde was talking to Mrs. D'Oyley.

"And I wonder," said Constance as she fastened off her thread, "who it was that I heard this morning coaxing Tim to sing a

very doleful ballad while he was cleaning his knives, and then laughing at him?"

Edgar smiled and coloured.

"All I hope is that you rewarded Tim handsomely for his exertions. Now, in the first place," said Constance, holding back the mended gloves, "you are to bring me an answer—"

"Yes, I know."

"You are not to break the pony's knees; if you do, papa may forgive you, but I never can."

"I am not going to."

"Grammatical! Next—"

"Oh! Constance, I want to be off!"

"I know you do. Pay great attention to that steep bit of lane near Hillsted Church, and don't take him through the mill-stream coming back. There!"

"Thank you, dear," said Edgar, seizing his gloves and running out of the room.

"On my word," said Constance turning to Mr. Forde, "you are always laughing at me."

“If you will be so amusing,” he replied, “I cannot help it.”

“I hope then that you will be amusing in your turn,” said Constance.

“If you would give me my cue,” said he; “I only wish to know how to amuse you. Do you like scandal?”

“Not much,” said Constance.

“Politics?”

“Not at all.”

“What do you read chiefly?”

“Any thing that interests me. I was reading this morning a little Italian work, *Il duca d'Atene*.”

“Do you like Italian?”

“Very well. But oh! how I wish that one could be mesmerised into a knowledge of German! I wish so earnestly to read Schiller.”

“There are some good translations of German plays in the old numbers of Blackwood's—the *Horæ Germanicæ*.”

“But I never like poetry translated; so

much of the pathos depends on the cadence."

"Yes," said Mr. Forde, "I think a translated poem bears the same relation to the original, that a print does to a picture; the colour is wanting, but the intention of the author is preserved."

"Just look here," said Constance pointing to the table: "that boy has left the books after all."

"Then let me have the pleasure of taking them over for you," said Mr. Forde.

"Not for the world. The books are of no consequence. It only shews what boys are," returned Constance.

"I wish you would let me ride over with them; you do not know how much I like to be useful."

"But I could not flatter you by saying you would be useful in the present case. I shall see Mary in a day or two."

"Still there is a note—"

“If Edgar has any wits left, he will remember that it was only to ask advice concerning the little insects on the greenhouse plants.”

“I have a remedy everybody has,” said Mr. Forde; “but really you will find tobacco-smoke very efficacious.”

“Thank you,” said Constance. “The next thing is to find a smoker! Mamma, shall we send for all the old men from the almshouse, and seat them in full divan with a pipe a-piece?”

Mrs. D'Oyley called Constance a giddy girl, and offered to shew Mr. Forde the greenhouse and the suffering plants, her invalids as Constance termed them. Mr. Forde told them the best way of fumigating, and then paused to admire the nice appearance of the plants.

“I am taking every word you say as a compliment,” said Constance; “for it is literally my work. I have no gardeners and sub-gardeners toiling while I take the praise.”

“ I don't believe you ever could take praise you had not earned,” said Mr. Forde earnestly.

“ Ah !” said she, “ do you study character ?”

“ If I did,” thought Mr. Forde, “ your's would baffle me.”

It was not only that she did not seek admiration, but she really and gravely believed herself incapable of exciting it. He looked at her as she stood with the sun shining across her rich hair, the delicate bloom on her cheek heightened by talking, her long eyelashes cast down as she arranged some bending flower, unconsciously, for her thoughts were otherwise employed. He marked that tremulous, half-smiling movement of the lips, so surely indicative of extreme sensibility. He stood in perfect silence for some time, and wondered (it is a fancy sometimes with those who love) how she would move, what she would say or do next. At last Constance, starting a little, drew her watch from her waist-

band and glancing at it, held it smilingly to Mr. Forde.

“Is it possible?” he exclaimed.

“Very easily possible,” said she; “I have an engagement this afternoon with a poor woman; and you, I dare say, are engaged with a much finer one somewhere or other.”

“I have, indeed, an annoying engagement to dinner some ten miles off,” he said.

“Well, then, I pity you; I can do no more,” she replied.

“If you would give me a flower to wear, I should be more than consoled,” said he.

He spoke as if half in jest.

“Well, I never met with such unconscionable begging!” exclaimed Constance, “unprincipled, I may say! What! do you pay no more respect to your own fine conservatories than to come hither and ask for flowers? I am shocked at you.”

Mr. Forde began to stammer, but she shook her head and passed him into the drawing-room.

"I am driven away," he said to Mrs. D'Oyley as he entered.

"I am sure I hope not," said she politely.

"I will tell you my only excuse for making such unreasonable calls," said Mr. Forde turning to Constance, "I meet you so seldom anywhere."

Constance did not say that she was so attached to home that she could scarcely bear to leave it, although that was more true in her case than in most others; she replied frankly:

"I know it: we are not rich enough to keep much company, so we go out but little in return; you understand?"

Mr. D'Oyley came into the drawing-room soon after Mr. Forde had taken his leave, and he and Constance chanced to be alone there.

"My dear," he said after a pause.

"Yes, papa," returned Constance.

"I think Mr. Forde seems to be coming very often to our house."

"So I think, papa," replied Constance;

There was a long silence ; at last she said :
 “ *Too* often, do you think, papa ?”

“ That depends very much upon yourself, my dear ;” said her father. “ I should be glad that you attached no meaning to his visits.”

“ Indeed, papa, I do not,” said Constance blushing, “ however, I have neither beauty nor money to attract him. I look on him merely as an agreeable acquaintance.”

She *thought* so.

CHAPTER V.

Look you—I have fitted
A husband for you, noble and deserving :
No shrinking back !

THE LADY'S TRIAL.

Los ojos cuya lumbre bien pudiera
Tornar clara la noche tenebrosa,
Y escurecer el sol à mediadía
Me convirtiéron luego en otra cosa.

GARCILASO DE LA VEGA.

I HAVE said that Lady Hernshaw was a very clever woman, and it may readily be supposed that this excellence was peculiarly displayed in the management of and for her beautiful daughter. Her instructions had made Isabel at eighteen an elegant woman : she conversed well, wrote well, dressed well, feigned well—the most needful lesson

of all ; and had as nearly as possible suppressed all those emotions which are most natural and becoming to a young mind. Lady Hernshaw knew that genuine impulses, like real tears on the stage, are not half so graceful, and seldom as effective as those which are assumed in nice proportion to the object required.

Her reasons for so doing were common and easily divined ; but her training was admirable. Her daughter must make a great match. To accomplish this, she was gracefully educated ; not loaded with erudition, but polished and well-informed on topics of light literature. She was not indulged in habits of female intimacy, she had no young friends with cross-barred correspondence to engross her fancy and encourage her in dreams of romantic attachments. She was made false ; how else could she be brought to pledge her faith to any man her mother might select ? She was heartless ; or her whole nature, the very pulses of her life, would revolt from a marriage without affection. The only young

person with whom she was at all acquainted was Constance D'Oyley. There was a reason for Lady Hernshaw permitting her daughter to cultivate the society of the D'Oyleys, independently of the very obvious one that Constance was not attractive to the other sex; should she chance to marry, Lady Hernshaw knew that she would directly be pronounced the lovely Mrs. So-and-so, but as a single woman she did not happen to excite any general admiration. But Lady Hernshaw in common with many other *clever* people, entertained, where her personal interest was concerned, views whose wildness would startle your merely *sensible* woman.

She had for years past fixed upon Lord Bevis as the husband of her daughter, and Mr. D'Oyley was the only person who had access to that eccentric individual. She knew that in the world of London there are a great many more handsome girls than there are lords to marry them; and she knew also that although Sir George Hern-

shaw had made a great deal of money in speculations, he had lost a great deal too, and that Isabel had nothing but her beauty to advance her in life. She knew nothing, it is true, of the person of Lord Bevis, but she was very well acquainted with the extent of his property, and she was satisfied that she could secure nothing more advantageous for her daughter than his Lordship's hand. And connected with the D'Oyleys was some vague hope just amounting to the absence of despair, that Lord Bevis might be induced to relax the strictness of his seclusion in their favour, and that Isabel, through her intimacy with them, might at some time or other be thrown in his way.

But fortune, which sometimes takes a pleasure in frustrating the most laudable efforts had hitherto afforded no assistance to her schemes ; still perseverance was a virtue which Lady Hernshaw possessed in an eminent degree, and we shall see that in due time she reaped her reward.

“ What a stupid evening we have passed,

my dear Isabel," said Lady Hernshaw, settling herself in her corner of the carriage as they rolled home from a quadrille party held at the house of a friend, "I am very glad your father did not accompany us."

"Mrs. Allingham's parties are always so dull," returned her daughter; "such a very bad style of young men one always meets there!"

"Young Mr. Forde is decidedly handsome," said Lady Hernshaw; "although it is as well for me to remark, *en passant*, that he is quite out of your way."

"Do you think him handsome?" said Miss Hernshaw, languidly.

"Decidedly. And really he has a very good manner. If he were but a marquis, Isabel!"

Miss Hernshaw was pulling her bouquet to pieces in silence; perhaps it was well that the darkness concealed her blushes.

"You talked a great deal to him," said her Ladyship.

“ Oh ! he is very amusing,” replied Isabel carelessly.

“ Be guarded,” returned her mother, “ it is not always safe to amuse oneself at the expense of a man’s feelings. *The thing gets about* : now that silly Clifton, who—”

“ Oh, worse than that !” cried Isabel. “ Poor Mr. Bohun ! I cannot bear to think of that ; but it was not my fault.”

“ Whose fault then ?” exclaimed Lady Hernshaw, whose temper was very quickly roused ; “ a man pays his addresses to a young girl which are not acceptable to her parents, and they are declined ; such things I hope are not of very rare occurrence. Let me hear no farther allusion to that subject.”

Isabel, who certainly did not number violence of temper among her faults, sighed and was silent ; and Lady Hernshaw after indulging in a short monologue concerning the toils of mothers, and the ingratitude of daughters, followed her example and soon after fell into a doze. She was startled

out of it by a flash of lightning which lit the whole surrounding landscape into day, and revealed for a moment the pale face of her daughter, who was sitting erect and motionless with the tears still standing on her beautiful cheek. A peal of thunder followed that seemed to shake the earth—then another flash, with a crash close upon it, and then a sudden torrent of enormous hail-stones. The horses stood still cowering beneath the storm.

“ Oh, how terrible !” said Isabel covering her eyes.

“ It is, indeed—another—what a peal ! No animals will bear this. Is there no house near ?”

“ None,” said Isabel, as the whole length of road was again illuminated with terrible distinctness ; “ I know where we are.”

“ Some way from home, are we not ?”

“ Oh, yes ! three miles nearly.”

“ What can we do ?”

The servant came round to the carriage

door at the same moment to repeat the question.

“ It is better to wait a little, Henry, no horses can face this storm ; but are we near any trees ? ”

“ Not *very* near, my Lady ; but we are just on the brow of the hill. ”

“ That's bad, is it not ? ”

“ Yes, my Lady. Barton says a man was struck last year by lightning hereabouts, and two sheep the year before. ”

Servants always do remember these kind things just at the right time. Just then a horseman followed by another dashed past the carriage at full gallop. At the same instant of time, a blaze of fearful brilliancy enveloped earth and sky in one sheet of flame, while a burst of thunder, more awful than any of the others, rolled long and loud over head. The horse of the foremost rider fell headlong to the ground, and of course the horseman was precipitated with him. For some moments the inmates of the carriage were too much engrossed by

their own plunging horses to inquire the fate of the rider ; but soon after a voice at a little distance was heard to cry out :

“ A light, a light, for God’s sake ! My Lord is killed ! ”

“ It is Lord Bevis,” cried Lady Hernshaw. “ Henry, go directly—take one of the carriage lamps.”

Now Lady Hernshaw was a very kind-hearted woman ; she would give her daughter deliberately into the hands of a fool or a profligate, provided he were of sufficient quality ; but any person in distress was sure to command her warmest assistance, particularly if his suffering took place immediately under her own eye. She leaned from the window and tried to listen to the low muttered conversation that the men were holding a few paces in advance of the carriage. At last she called her servant to her.

“ What is the matter, Henry ? Anything very serious ? ”

“The gentleman seems stunned, my Lady.”

“ Had he not better be brought into the carriage? The storm seems abating. We can more easily procure assistance for him at home.”

“ I’ll see, my Lady.”

Another low consultation with the other servant ensued, after which he approached the carriage.

“ I am sorry, madam,” he said, in a manner superior to that of an ordinary servant, “ to be compelled to decline your obliging offer, it is very much against my inclination ; but my Lord is so averse to seeing any strangers, even for an instant, that I have no alternative.”

“ But surely,” said Lady Hernshaw eagerly, “ this is no time for scruples. I only propose that he should share our carriage as far as my house ; it is then at his disposal to convey him home.”

The man replied that if possible he would persuade his Lord to accept her kindness, and went back to his master.

In a few moments he returned with Lord Bevis leaning on his arm, who, lifting his hat to the eager inquiries of Lady Hernshaw, said in a very low confused manner, that he was sufficiently recovered to proceed, and could not possibly intrude himself upon her party.

Lady Hernshaw grasping her daughter's arm, whispered in her ear: "Ask him—you!"

Isabel knew by the trembling of her mother's hand that she was very much excited. This husband hunting after all is something like field sports—angling or shooting—there's a little enlivening uncertainty about it at all times.

"Pray, pray come in," said Isabel leaning forwards, and speaking in the sweetest tones of her delightful voice. "Indeed, after such a terrible fall, you do very wrong to expose yourself to this weather; it is beginning to rain again."

The dim light of the lamp fell on her exquisite figure and snowy arms, and sha-

dowed forth her faultless features and lustrous eyes, and her glittering light auburn hair folded back beneath a coronal of blush roses. Before she had finished her sentence, Lord Bevis had his foot on the step and in another moment he had taken his place in the carriage. Anxiously as Lady Hernshaw scanned him, she could distinguish nothing of his figure beneath the heavy folds of his cloak. As he passed through the streak of lamplight, she discerned that his face was of a ghastly paleness ; but then people do not usually look their very best after a heavy fall. She was certain he would do very well for Isabel. His defects of person could not be so very bad—she perceived nothing of them—and besides, they did not diminish his estates by a single acre. No encounter could be more fortunate. Lady Hernshaw was no novice ; she did not endeavour to ingratiate herself with her prize by a torrent of assiduous questions ; her object was to put him at his ease with them by degrees.

“ You are better now, dearest,” said she pressing her daughter’s hand. “ You were sadly frightened and no wonder ; it was a dreadful storm.”

“ *Were* you frightened ?” said Lord Bevis in the same low voice. “ True, you have so much at stake—so much beauty. Now I—I scarcely know what fear is.”

“ Ah !” thought Lady Hernshaw, he has nothing of the tone of good society ; talks of his feelings and all that sort of thing. “ You know, my Lord,” she said, “ we women claim the privilege of cowardice without disgrace, and this poor girl, indeed, made large use of her right : she almost fainted.”

“ Most natural !” said Lord Bevis. “ And yet in storm or calm, the same heaven hangs over all !”

“ Oh dear, how awkward !” thought her Ladyship. “ I do believe the man is religious ; and then, indeed, there is no knowing. However, we must make the best of it ;” and she directly remembered, and

said, something about men being likened to worms or grass.

"At all times," he replied; "but it is only when they are measured by circumstances that they feel a truth too common to be well understood."

"Oh, this is dreadful!" thought Lady Hernshaw. "But all his talking cannot melt down his property, that is my comfort!"

How desperately vulgar guilt is, and how individual! How many noble peasants, and coarsely thinking ladies in velvet gowns does experience bring before us!

"I do hope we are not driving too fast for you," said Isabel.

"Not at all, I thank you," replied Lord Bevis.

"Do you feel better?" she asked timidly.

"Quite, quite well," he returned.

The carriage stopped. Lord Bevis got out and offered the ladies his hand, mechanically as it seemed; where he learned that piece of civilization, Lady Hernshaw

could not conjecture. He followed them into the hall like one in a dream, and stood gazing upon Isabel with such deep abstraction as not to be aware that Lady Hershaw was speaking to him, until she had repeated her question several times.

“ Will you not allow me to send for our medical man ? ”

“ On no account. With your permission I will avail myself of your carriage immediately to take me home.”

“ Pray be persuaded to take some refreshment.”

“ Nothing, thank you—I am going home to dinner.”

He forgot it was anything remarkable to dine at two o'clock in the morning. Isabel who acted beneath her mother's eye, as birds are said to do beneath the gaze of the rattlesnake, now approached him.

“ Do you know,” said she, with her brilliant smile which lit her face into the likeness of a seraph's, all love and wisdom, “ do you know we have half a right to keep *you here*, now we have you ; because, if

any harm should happen from your not taking advice, we should feel ourselves very much to blame."

Those winning tones fell like dew upon the ear of the solitary man. He seemed at first scarcely able to reply; then coming up to her and taking her hand as he might have touched a queen's, he said:

"An hour ago I should have thought an adventure so foreign to my habits, a most vexatious occurrence; now, with far more cause for lasting regret, I esteem myself beyond expression happy."

Isabel not exactly applying his words, stood silent, with a sweet smile on her lips, and it was not until he had left the house, that she turned and met her mother's look of triumph.

"Good girl," she said, "he's yours. You shall be Lady Bevis."

"I?" said poor Isabel trembling with fear and wonder.

"You doubt it?" said her Ladyship as the carriage rolled from the door. "There goes your *husband*, Isabel."

CHAPTER VI.

Oh ! deal magnanimously with me, nor
What 'tis not wrong to feel, when thou dost feel it,
Believe 'tis wrong to speak !—Frankly ! couldst love me ?

WOMAN'S WIT.

Conceit, more rich in matter than in words.

SHAKESPEARE.

“ Yes, it is very fine, very fine indeed, to sit with your legs out of the window, and carve your name on the window-seat with my pen-knife instead of doing your lesson,” exclaimed Constance. “ Come Edgar, now, *tirer* !”

“ *Tirer*, tired, at least I am,” said Edgar, yawning.

“ Well, I thought nobody could ever tire of these memoirs of Madame de la Rochejaquelin.”

“ Oh, hang French.”

"Yes, hang everything except cricket-balls and stupid boys; now do attend, there's a good boy."

"I know why you're in such a hurry," said Edgar, mischievously; "you think Mr. Forde will be here soon."

Constance did the worst thing she could possibly do—she ran out of the room. Edgar looked after her with an appearance of great glee, and then quietly slid down from the window into the garden.

Some time after, as Constance was hunting for violets along the sunny bank of their meadow, her brother came up to her bursting with laughter, and told her that his mamma had sent him to find her, for that somebody was in the drawing-room and she must guess who it was.

"Uncle Thornton?"

"No."

"Uncle Hilton?"

"No; that's nearer though."

"Well then, Eustace Hilton. Mary told

me he was returned from Malta, and more conceited than ever."

"Yes, the regiment's come back, and such a quiz as he looks; and there's Mr. Forde and another man in the drawing-room." And, pursued Edgar as Constance took off her bonnet in the hall, "your hair is all rough; the comb will fall out behind, in a minute."

Constance laughing, secured her comb, but protested against going upstairs to beautify herself. With her colour a little heightened, and the heavy curls of her beautiful hair in a picturesque state of disarray, she entered the room, and found two strange-looking gentlemen in undress uniform, one of whom she apprehended to be her cousin. Eustace was conversing with her mother, Mr. Forde with the other stranger.

"Constance, do you not recollect your cousin Eustace?" said Mrs. D'Oyley.

"Yes, mamma, that's Eustace," said

she, recognising him by a slight bow, and just touching the fingers which he languidly held out to her ; “ I don't think he is much grown—are you, Eustace? You ought to know, because they measure you, don't they, like a horse, when you go into the army? Oh, no thank you,” said she to the other gentleman who was placing a chair for her, “ I am looking about for my own particular chair, I cannot talk in any other.”

“ Here it is,” said Mr. Forde.

“ Oh, thank you !” returned Constance. “ What is that little book on the table? You know a book-worm detects a new book as readily as a fine lady a hat from Herbault.”

“ Only Goethe's Faust, which I thought you might like to look at.”

“ Translated, I hope ;” said Constance.

“ Yes, Lord Leveson Gower's translation.”

“ Eustace,” said she, raising her voice a little, “ have you ever read the Faust?”

"I haven't the least idea what it is," he drawled.

"The history of a famous race-horse ; he won, I can't tell how many cups at Doncaster."

"Really, I never heard of him."

"Well then, you must be a dunce, you always were at school ; I remember you used to tell us how they beat you. By the by, do they pursue the same system with you now ? No—what a pity !"

Every body laughed : Eustace in his usual tone contrived to articulate, "What an idea !"

"No, don't, Eustace," said Constance ; "don't talk about ideas, because that sets people reflecting whether we all have such things or not, which is not always advantageous."

Mr. D'Oyley now came into the room, Eustace presented his friend to him as Captain——, the name was inaudible.

"I don't know," said Constance looking attentively at the Faust, "I really don't

know if it is that fur he wears over his mouth by way of moustaches, but I cannot make out one word in three that he utters."

Mr. Forde supplied the name of the Captain—Bohun. He said he had met him at Malta, to which place he had made a pilgrimage from Naples in search of some pictures of Caravaggio's, painted when that extraordinary man was among the Knights of Malta.

Constance found her little book of Retzsch's etchings, and began comparing them with the poem. Mr. Forde, leaning over her chair, pointed out the lines which referred to the different plates. She assured him that these outlines would bear the closest inspection even through a magnifying glass; and she asked Edgar where that burning-glass was with which he was so kindly trying to light her kitten's whiskers the other morning.

The quiet-looking Captain Bohun took it from a table near which he was sitting and gave it to her. It then struck her that

she had seen him before ; where she could not recollect. Eustace at the same moment rose, and he and his friend took leave together.

“ Oh ! I am so glad,” said Constance, “ I have two and twenty questions to ask papa ; first about old nurse Whitmore, is she better ?”

“ Much better, my dear.”

“ Will she want any more arrow-root ?”

“ Why that you had better ask her to-morrow. But, my little girl, if you mean to smooth your hair before dinner, it is almost time you set about it.”

“ Yes, papa, but—”

“ Mr. D'Oyley has been kind enough to ask me to dinner,” said Mr. Forde seeing her look towards him.

“ Oh, dear, how dull for you !” exclaimed Constance. “ No, don't answer. I know I have said a very stupid thing, but I really did not mean to—”

She left the room while she was speaking, and Mr. Forde was obliged to wait

until she returned before he could contradict her assertion.

“ Did you ever read the Sketches of Young Gentlemen ?” asked Constance as they stood by the window before dinner; “ because Eustace is an exact resemblance of one of those military young gentlemen who figure on the frontispiece.”

“ I see, Miss D'Oyley,” said Mr. Forde, “ that there is one fault to which you give no quarter.”

“ You are right—affectation ; especially in my own relations.”

“ But what do you think of your cousin's friend, Captain Bohun ? He was the gentleman who first told me of your silent propensities.”

“ Then I *have* seen him before ; I thought so. Ah ! I recollect, at Lady Hernshaw's, more than two years ago.”

“ Yes. He was a great admirer of Miss Hernshaw's ; was he not ?”

“ Very great ; and—”

Constance stopped ; for the history was

not one which could be told with great credit to her friend.

“ Oh ! I know the story,” said Mr. Forde. “ His father’s rich brother, Sir Guy Bohun was then unmarried, and Miss Hernshaw accepted him—of course the old people made it a condition that he should go abroad for a couple of years ; he joined his regiment at Malta, and soon after, Sir Guy, contrary to all expectation, married ; upon which Miss Hernshaw found some pretext for dismissing her lover.”

“ Not Isabel, indeed,” said Constance eagerly ; “ she had no voice in the matter—do believe it !”

“ I will,” said he, “ for she is your friend.”

Something in his manner made Constance feel not quite at her ease ; she went to the table and took up her work, wondering why dinner was not announced.

“ Don’t you recollect,” said Mr. Forde taking a chair by her side, “ how you escaped from me the first time we met?

I don't mean that you should do so again."

Constance had made a false stitch in her netting, and she could not undo it while he was looking at her so ; she went back to the window.

"This tiresome silk !" said she by way of answer. She tangled it, and then laughed almost hysterically.

"Nothing could put you out of temper," said Mr. Forde.

"Oh, ask Edgar !" cried Constance looking up in her fresh candid manner, "he will tell you a different tale."

"Do you think I could believe him rather than my own heart ?" he asked.

An hour ago she would have been astonished at such a question ; then, she almost expected it—so much difference is made by a few words and looks. Her fingers trembled as she still sought to disengage the silks, and she had nothing to say, and silence was so awkward, and Mr. Forde was as awkward as herself, trembling as

much, and colouring nearly as much. She looked straight out of the window, and her eyes began to grow dim with tears ; he endeavoured gently to draw her netting out of her hand, and begged that she would not annoy herself with it. She dropped the work, and there was her hand at liberty ; he took possession of it and began :

“ If I dared to interpret—could I venture to hope that—”

She was silent. In another moment he had obtained a trembling permission to refer his hopes to her father. Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley came in ; they had not been absent ten minutes ; and in that time what things had occurred ! At dinner she was absent and confused. Edgar laughed at her ; even her father looked surprised. She was so glad when her mamma rose from table ; she thought they must have been sitting a long while, and yet when they went into the drawing-room, there were the Miss Brownings come to drink tea, and they were worse than Edgar, they stared at her

so much. When first they heard Mr. Forde was dining there, they both looked very cross, but a little while after they thought it would be better policy to put on a smile, and tease Constance a little about it.

“People will talk, you know, dear,” said Miss Browning seating herself at a fine portfolio of prints; “it’s foolish and disagreeable, particularly when a man is the subject.”

Constance blushing painfully, said “it was *very* foolish, and hoped her visitor had light enough.”

“Quite,” said Miss Browning tossing over a few prints; “and then when nothing comes of it, it makes a person so *very* awkward.”

“I dare say,” returned Constance, stooping to search for some engraving; which, she did not know.

“I do feel for you, dear,” pursued the lady.

Constance looked all wonder.

“I would’nt mind though, love; when

people talk of such very improbable things, because they can't be generally believed."

The door opened, and Mr. D'Oyley entered alone.

"Where is Mr. Forde?" asked Mrs. D'Oyley.

"He is gone home;" replied Mr. D'Oyley quietly.

"What!" said Miss Browning, aside, "could not your attractions induce him to remain to tea?"

"So it seems;" she returned, growing very pale.

She would have given very much to know what had passed between Mr. Forde and her father during her absence. However, she was obliged to make the tea, and she found it required a great deal of close attention to prevent her putting the cream into the sugar basin, or leaving out the item, tea, altogether, especially as she was closely watching her papa's face all the time she was pouring it out. He seemed very cheerful, and was

joking and laughing with the younger Miss Browning concerning the seven little dogs in which she indulged ; but Constance imagined his spirits were forced, and that he avoided looking at her, and several other little fancies, which so excited her, that by the time the Brownings took leave, she was just ready to burst into tears.

"Well, Constance, my dear," said her father approaching her.

"Oh, papa !" she exclaimed, hiding her face on his shoulder.

"What do you think, Margaret," said Mr. D'Oyley, turning to his anxious wife, "shall we dismiss Mr. Forde altogether?"

"Mr. Forde, my dear?"

"Even so : what say you, Constance?"

Constance said nothing, but she transferred her arms from her father's to her mother's neck.

Mrs. D'Oyley after trying indistinctly to express her happiness at the prospect, melted into tears. Constance joined her. Mr. D'Oyley, holding her hand, was not

quite free himself from a similar imputation. As for Edgar, as soon as he learned the state of the case, he sat down on a footstool, and to use his own expression "blubbered" heartily.

These joyful occasions !

However in a few minutes they began to talk it over, and Mrs. D'Oyley confessed that Mr. Forde was always a favourite of her's, and she had thought, she had seen from the first how it would end.

"That first party ! Constance, my love."

"Yes, only think," said Constance, with tearful eyes ; "to admire me, to care for me, whom nobody ever thought about—in that way, I mean !"

"My dear, you are so young still—you have been so little seen," said Mrs. D'Oyley, jealous for her daughter's reputation.

"And then I have no fortune. I hope, papa, he knows that," said Constance.

"Clearly, my dear."

"And no expectations from uncle Thornton."

“ I told him that Mr. Thornton had already disposed of his property in favour of young Parker ; he said he was glad of the circumstance, with many flattering things which will come better from him than me.”

“ Oh, dear mamma !” said Constance looking up admiringly into her mother’s face.

Edgar, who had been for some time rubbing his eyes very hard with his handkerchief, and who felt, in consequence, quite calm and collected, now began to relate certain anecdotes of Mr. Forde’s groom—that he let him ride his master’s Arabian about the court while he was making a call—and that he had said Master Edgar ought to have cords and tops, and follow the hounds, for there was not a bit of fear in him—that he had promised the said Edgar a ferret—and that, in short, the groom was a very good fellow. However, as the groom had not just made a proposal, the party preferred talking of his master who had,

and they were in the midst of this occupation when little Tim brought in a note for Mr. D'Oyley.

“Read it, Constance, my dear,” said her father; “I am sorry to say my eyes fail me very much by candle-light.”

“You should have a stronger light, papa—a Cambridge lamp,” said Constance opening the note.

“No, my dear, I can scarcely bear the light of a candle near me.”

“Oh, dear papa, how curious; this note is from Lord Bevis—the first I ever saw of his—he begs you to see him early to-morrow morning, if possible.”

“Certainly. Edgar, give me my writing case; there, Constance, is that legible? I can hardly see.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. D'Oyley, “you should speak to Mr. Martyn about your eyes. I never heard you complain so much before.”

“Oh! it is nothing,” said Mr. D'Oyley; “I have always suffered more or less from

weakness. Give that to the servant, Tim."

"What did Tim look at you for so cunningly as he went out?" asked Constance.

"I know," said Edgar.

"Well, but I don't know," returned Constance.

"Why—then—I dare say there's a bird in my new trap."

"What shall you do with the bird? let it go?"

"I should think not," replied Edgar.

"Then you are a very cruel little boy. I shall not allow you to have a trap."

"There's papa talking to mamma about Mr. Forde," said Edgar; "you should go and hear what they are saying and leave my trap alone."

Constance turned her head, and Edgar went out of the room to learn if he had rightly interpreted Tim's last look.

CHAPTER VII.

Oh ! can she pity me ?
Of all the paths that lead to a woman's love,
Pity's the straightest.

KNIGHT OF MALTA.

It was a still fresh morning, the unbroken dew lay all around like a sheet of silver, when Mr. D'Oyley passed along the winding shrubberies which skirted the upward road through Herne Park to the house. There was always a singular repose about this domain ; the squirrels ran boldly across the path, the hares crept lazily away as he advanced, and their light steps might be traced along the wet grass which lay sparkling beneath the early rays of the sun. The house stood on the brow of the hill,

on a lawn of smooth turf, with old fantastic trees around, and a view which extended far over the neighbouring country.

At the foot of the hill the river wound along, and below lay the fishing cottage, a little gothic toy, standing in a glade of beech trees reaching to the water's edge ; there were two or three children playing in the sunshine, and the mother watching them from the cottage porch ; all so distant and diminished from where D'Oyley stood, that it might seem a little bit out of fairy land.

The door was silently opened by an old-looking servant, and he stepped into a lofty hall supported by two rows of marble pillars. There were armorial bearings cut on the walls in stone, but no pictures ; only one exquisite statue of Hebe disgraced. He went through saloon, drawing-room, library, all stored with fine pictures, and entered a small writing-closet which looked not very unlike a lady's morning-room.

Gothic windows of painted glass opened into a beautiful flower-garden enclosed

from the park, beyond which the velvet grass rose gradually on either side into banks, skirted with trees and ornamented occasionally with statues and vases of white marble. Jessamines hung round the lattice, and flower-beds that bespoke the most careful culture lay without. The pictures in the room were all gems of art. An elaborate Battista, where hyacinths, and tulips, and roses with the dew on their leaves were heaped into a basket with all that glorious profusion which characterised that artist's productions, was opposed by a Roes-træten, in which a casket of chased silver, and a handful of coins, an old worm-eaten book of engravings left open, and an antique watch with its ponderous chain and seals between the leaves, gave one the idea that these relics had been laid on that very marble slab, and there preserved untouched until the present time.

There was also a small and beautiful painting of a virgin and child, valuable as a study of colour and composition, but still

more from the expression, the tremulous fear depicted in the mother's face which gives to the emotion of love its most intense and poetical attribute.

There was a table half covered with books, and a very luxurious easy chair pulled close to it. A volume of Clarendon lay open with a pair of gloves thrown down beside it, and close to the chair was a stand with a portfolio of magnificent engravings, principally from Vandyke's portraits of that eventful period. Mr. D'Oyley drew it towards him, and turned over the calm disdainful face of Capel, the picturesque gallantry of Falkland, the merry mischief of Buckingham, and the dark-browed loveliness of Henrietta Maria. He was searching for a portrait of the haughty Pembroke, when Lord Bevis entered.

His Lordship was so slightly deformed in person, that his rigid seclusion might have surprised those who are best acquainted with the wayward fancies common to people in his circumstances, and having been the result

of a fall in infancy, his countenance was free from that peculiar expression which in itself would betray the most artfully concealed deformity to an experienced eye.

He had passed a neglected and suffering childhood at an estate in Wales belonging to his father, uncheered save by the hurried annual visit of his noble and beautiful mother. He was a cripple and a second son, but the very causes that would have added warmth to the affection of a common parent froze its current in the heart of the lofty countess. Her eldest son was all that her fondest desire could paint: handsome, spirited, admired, and attached to her; the younger was hanging on the margin of the grave, and that not in a sentimental attitude; so she left him to complete his journey without her care or sympathy. She told her intimate friends that she thought it would be a great mercy if it would please Heaven to take poor Leonard, and certainly she offered no impediment to his departure. But the pure air of the

Welsh mountains brought him health ; his figure improved, he dismissed his doctors, and requested his mother to replace them with a tutor. This was a difficulty ; but Mr. D'Oyley, who held a small living in that neighbourhood from the late Lord Bevis, was petitioned by the countess to devote a few hours of his time to the instruction of her son. He readily acceded to her wish, although he found a task more arduous than he had in the least anticipated. His pupil was gifted with singular talents ; he had, almost unaided, made wonderful progress in several branches of learning ; but, although he accepted with eagerness the intelligent aid which Mr. D'Oyley afforded him in such pursuits, his haughty and embittered spirit rejected utterly every attempt on the part of his preceptor to win his confidence or to soften the gloom of his character.

It was a new and painful position for Mr. D'Oyley to feel that he was regarded with mistrust and dislike. However, time

and circumstances did their accustomed office ; his scholar learned to feel that there was one person who entertained a sincere and disinterested regard for his welfare—one whose religion was not merely a name, but a principle which directed his life—one whose kindness might be constitutional, but whose steadfastness of purpose was based on higher grounds. Then it was that Mr. D'Oyley was enabled to awake him to a sense of his own responsibilities—to point out the indissoluble links which exist between man and his fellow-creatures—to put in action the benevolence of a nature only too finely endowed with sensibilities. On one point alone he found him inexorable : he was determined on preserving his seclusion ; no arguments, no entreaties could prevail on him to go forth into the world. The calamity which could estrange a mother from her son, he said, was argument enough against his tempting the charities of mankind. Even when the premature death of his brother put him in possession of the

earldom, he remained unchanged. He transferred, indeed, his place of residence from Wales to Herne Park, but it was only to carry out a more total system of retirement than before. A habit of late hours, in which he had indulged from boyhood, had from year to year crept on to greater excess, until he might be said, with truth, to turn night into day. The death of the incumbent had installed Mr. D'Oyley in the living of C——, and placing him near his old pupil, had renewed the familiarity of their intercourse. And, therefore, he had wished to see him now to impart to him the strange adventure he had met with; to own that Isabel had made an impression on his mind which never could be effaced, and to entreat him to point out the means, which his solitary life denied him, of seeing her if possible from time to time, and pleading his own cause with all the ardour of strong truth.

Mr. D'Oyley might have found many women whom he would have thought more

worthy to share the heart of his friend ; but he knew that in such matters every man will select for himself ; he could not, however, refrain from telling Lord Bevis that he believed a worse, a falser system of education had never been pursued than that under which Miss Hernshaw had been trained.

“ And the natural beauty of her heart is still unimpaired,” exclaimed Lord Bevis ; “ it is in her face—legibly written by the hand of Heaven.”

“ I wish it may be so ;” said Mr. D'Oyley.

“ She looked so full of pity,” said Lord Bevis, “ that I have thought it possible to excite through her compassion a warmer feeling in her heart ; if this is an idle hope, tell me so ; it would be kinder than to let me still hope on.”

“ It is my belief,” said Mr. D'Oyley, “ that if you were to offer her your hand this day it would be accepted. But I pray you, for your own sake, to take time to

examine the character of this young lady before you venture on an act which will colour your whole future existence."

"It is too late for that," said Lord Bevis impatiently.

"Write, then," said Mr. D'Oyley, "and beg that Lady Hernshaw will give you permission to visit at her house."

He took Mr. D'Oyley's advice and wrote. Lady Hernshaw's reply was a masterpiece. She invited him warmly to her family circle; promised that he should be received alone, and hinted just perceptibly that her daughter had been interested by their short and singular meeting.

CHAPTER VIII.

Shew me some way to 'scape these nuptials—do it !
Some opening for avoidance or escape.

THE HUNCHBACK.

Sarà più dolce assai
Il tuo destin del mio ;
Tu il genio tuo potrai
Meglio appagar di me.

METASTASIO.

ONE morning, after these events, Constance received a note from her friend Isabel, begging her in very urgent terms to call upon her in the course of the morning, and mentioning in a postscript that her mamma had gone to London for the day.

This latter piece of intelligence was rather welcome than otherwise to Constance, for Lady Hernshaw was possessed of a

somewhat uncertain temper, and her friends had no reason to complain of want of variety in her reception of them. So she obeyed her friend's summons with great alacrity, and was in Isabel's boudoir, even before her impatience could have believed it possible.

"Oh, dearest Constance!" said Isabel, embracing her friend, "I am so very glad to see you; sit down close to me, I want your advice."

"Well then, dear," said Constance, laughing as she took off her bonnet, "as soon as you have quite made up your own mind, let me hear the difficulty; that's the regular plan you know."

"Not mine, indeed," said Isabel; "will you have some luncheon?"

"Luncheon! we early people are beginning to think of dinner," said Constance.

"Oh! by-the-by, I have never shewn you that new pattern of worsted work," said Isabel rising; "at least it's silk, not worsted. I'll—"

“Don't fetch it, pray,” said Constance ; “because if you have taken too many or too few stitches in your moor's turban, you know I cannot set it right for you.”

“What good spirits you are in, Constance !” said Isabel sighing.

“And are not you, dear ? What's the matter ?” said Constance taking her hand.

“Oh, yes !” returned Isabel ; “and I have hardly told you yet, Constance, how I rejoice about Mr. Forde and you. I think you are so suited ; and I like extremely what I have seen of him. Do you know he reminds me a little, only a little, of—”

“Oh ! do tell me of whom,” said Constance.

“Of Mr. Bohun—Captain, now he is, I believe.”

“Do you think so ? Captain Bohun is so very quiet.”

“*Is !*” cried Isabel, her whole face lighting up, “have you seen him lately, then ?”

“Yes ; he is in the same regiment with

my cousin ; they both came to our house the other day."

Isabel sat thinking for some time, and then said, " Oh ! about Mr. Forde—how strangely things happen !"

" Do they not—so strangely," said Constance. " I do think it was wonder as much as any thing that made me not say no."

" He will be a happy man, Constance," said Isabel, " you are true in every word."

" I am sure I am," said Constance; " but nobody cared about it before."

" Well ; and women seldom *can* be true," said Isabel ; " so many things prevent it."

" Oh, no !" said Constance, " there are no circumstances too hard for God to guide us through."

" Oh ! that reminds me," said Isabel; " you have heard about Lord Bevis coming hither—you talk like him sometimes—well of course you know—and that is why I wished to see you—what mamma thinks of his visits."

“ Well, dear, and what do *you* ?” asked Constance.

“ Oh, he is frightful !” cried Isabel. “ I am ready to faint whenever I come into the room. He walks lame, and is crooked besides ; and those deep-set eyes look through you ! I only wish he could look into my heart and see what I really thought of him, but that cannot be.”

“ Cannot you show it ?” asked Constance.

“ What before mamma ? Oh, Constance ! if she does not think me agreeable enough to him, I have seen her lips turn white with rage.”

“ My dear Isabel !” said Constance.

“ But he really has the best heart—so kind, so considerate ; the very nurse who caused the mischief lives on his bounty in a cottage, somewhere. I am sure I wish she had not let him fall. And he has so long wanted something to love, and fixed so unfortunately upon me.”

“ And cannot you love such a man ?”

“Why, Constance, you don't know how short he is. And then his voice is low, but very harsh ; only fancy if he were to speak loud, and if he does but pass his hand through his hair, he looks exactly like a maniac ; indeed, I should not wonder if he were a little mad.”

“And what will you do ?”

“Just what mamma pleases, and you know what that will be. Lady Bevis ! anything for a coronet ! Not that I care for such things ; for so that I could have every thing handsome about me, I have no ambition at all to make a great match.”

“Oh ! dear Isabel, don't deceive him,” said Constance, “there's too much at stake ; think what he would feel to find, when it is too late, that you never gave him your heart.”

“Oh, but I really mean—let's see—tomorrow I am going to a ball ; but next day, or some day soon, I will sit down and talk myself into loving him.”

“No, do not laugh about it !”

“No,” said Isabel, who had talked herself into a very excited state, “no, because after all it will end in a tragedy. I shall marry a man I hate, and in course of time run away with a man I love ; my husband will shoot himself, and I—”

“Oh ! for the sake of womanhood,” exclaimed Constance, “do not say so, even in jest ; do not believe such a termination possible. Let nothing, no threats, no bribe, lead you to marry where you do not love. Oh, surely there is nothing that life affords worth such a falsehood !”

“Well, but you would not let me finish my picture,” said Isabel very calmly ; “I was going to say, I should die in a work-house.”

“Why will you pain me by talking so ?” asked Constance.

“I am sure,” said Isabel, laughing heartily, “you could not say that I should not deserve such a catastrophe.”

"Perhaps not ; but I should not be the less sorry," said Constance, half-frightened by her friend's changing manner.

"Would you come and see me?" asked Isabel.

"Oh, do not talk so!"

"Well, but would you?"

"Of course I would," returned Constance. "And now be serious : as soon as you can, write to Lord Bevis, and be very honest ; then when you have explained your feelings, if you are both contented—"

"I'll tell you, Constance," said Isabel. "Once, when I really think I had a heart, you know the time mamma made me write to Captain Bohun, I carried a letter of my own about me for three weeks in the hopes of finding some means of sending it ; and when we walked out, mamma suspected me, I think, and always took the side of the way next the letter box. Not one of the servants would have dared take it for me, and at last I burnt it. Now judge what chance I have of sending one ; besides, her

fury, if the match were broken off—you have no idea at all of mamma.”

Constance felt very glad that she had not.

“At least,” pursued Isabel, “unless you would help me.”

“But how, dear Isabel? You would not have a letter pass through my hands; you know I should not be justified in—”

“No, not that way; but I have some hope of escape now I hear that Captain Bohun is in the neighbourhood, if I could but meet him.”

“But Isabel, dear, two years have passed; even you might be forgotten in that time.”

Isabel smiled, and said “he had been very ill-treated, certainly; but still she thought that a word from her would have the effect of inducing him to forget all the past. Only, Constance, when you see him, try and learn how he feels towards me, and then I shall know what to do next. One thing I am resolved on, any marriage is preferable to the life I lead

at home. I will accept any alternative to escape from this roof."

"I will try and find out what you wish," said Constance; "but Captain Bohun is so very silent that even if I chance to see him, you must not be disappointed if I learn nothing. And do wait before you decide against Lord Bevis, because time will reconcile you to his peculiarities; and he seems to be so excellent a person."

"Will you change, Constance?" said Isabel, as her friend rose to take leave.

"What do you mean, dear?"

"Why, if you should grow tired of Mr. Forde, I will take him off your hands in exchange for Lord Bevis."

Constance laughed and blushed a little, but made no answer.

"You won't?" said Isabel, holding her back as she was about to leave the room. "Ah! Constance, all his virtues would never reconcile you to his appearance, though you have been exhorting me in his behalf."

“ I’m sure they would,” said Constance, slipping out of the room, “ if—if I were not—”

“ Better engaged !” said Isabel ; and Constance heard her silver laugh as she went down stairs.

She had been a little agitated by her conversation, and so took a path that would lead her home by a somewhat longer route, through a meadow and by the side of the mill-stream, a winding brook that led among rushes and osiers, over a pebbly bed and through rocky banks, with here and there a clump of ash or a sturdy oak reflected in the transparent water.

A sudden turn in the stream brought her in sight of two persons engaged in fishing ; Edgar was one, and to her great surprise, Captain Bohun the other.

“ Hush ! Constance, now don’t speak a word !” cried Edgar with great eagerness, totally forgetting that one voice was nearly as bad for sport as another ; “ you’ll startle the fish ! There’s such a beauty under that

stone—there—you can hardly see him ; and keep from the bank or he'll catch sight of your pink gown. Now—gently now ; don't laugh !”

Constance could not obey the last part of his directions ; for she had, by no means, a profound idea of his sagacity as a brother of the angle, and he was encumbered, moreover, with a rod much too long for him, and an old green fishing jacket of his brother's that came over his fingers' ends.

Captain Bohun took off his hat, and she was going to pass at once, but remembering Isabel's entreaties, she paused.

“I am really sorry I came this way,” said she ; “I know it is very provoking to be interrupted in fishing : it is almost the only thing that puts my brother out of temper.”

“What ! is he so devoted an angler ?” said Captain Bohun smiling, and laying his hand on Edgar's shoulder.

“No, my eldest brother, the owner of

that jacket," replied Constance, bursting into a fresh laugh as she surveyed it.

Captain Bohun laughed too, and Edgar coloured up and told Constance that she was a humbug.

"But I assure you I am not so keen a sportsman as to regret such an interruption," said Captain Bohun in a very pleasant manner.

Constance bowed, and was about to pass him again; but he looked as if he was going to speak, as with a woman's readiness she turned to Edgar, and asked him if he had really caught anything.

"I had a bite though," he replied, "and if you had not come up just then—"

Another laugh came from Constance and Captain Bohun; after all, she thought, if he was silent, there was some fun about him.

"We mean to have capital sport next time," he said, looking at Edgar; "this is not a good day for fishing—much too clear; we are not in fault nor our tackle either."

"I should think not," said Edgar, screwing the joints of his rod very hard together.

"I think," said Captain Bohun, "you know some people in this neighbourhood with whom I was formerly acquainted."

"Yes," said Constance, "the Hernshaws."

"How are they?" asked Captain Bohun.

"Sir George used to be very—"

Very stupid, Constance knew he was, but she did not know he was afflicted with any other complaint, so she said they were all very well.

"And Miss Hernshaw?" he said, hesitating.

"I have just been to see her," replied Constance; "she is well, and I do think more beautiful than ever."

Now Constance was herself looking remarkably pretty that morning, with the most lovely bloom on her cheeks which gave more than usual brilliancy to her soft grey eyes. Captain Bohun glanced at her as if he thought so; at least, he received her intelligence with great unconcern, and asked carelessly if Miss Hernshaw was going to be married.

Constance replied with some confusion that she didn't know exactly. There was a short pause, and then she said :

“How strange I should meet you ! Isabel had just been inquiring about you.”

“She does me great honour,” said Captain Bohun, disdainfully.

“Well,” said Constance, rather mischievously ; “I think it was mutual after all—this honour.”

Captain Bohun smiled and acknowledged that she was right, and as she turned her steps towards home, he took up his tackle and prepared to accompany her.

“I say,” exclaimed Edgar in an impressive whisper, and pulling Constance back by the sleeve, “papa has asked him and Eustace to dinner, so I came with him to fish, and I heard cook asking mamma to give out some cranberries, and I dare say it's for a tart ; and Tim and I went down to the stable to look at his horse, and it's a regular good one, an iron-grey, and I'll be bound we shall find Mr. Forde when we

get home ; and Eustace stopped behind to smoke a cigar down in the yard, and oh ! such fun ! he gave one to Tim and made him ill."

"I can tell Eustace if he does so again, I shall be very angry with him," said Constance ; "he is just like a monkey, so ugly and mischievous !"

When the party assembled before dinner, Mr. Forde was beside Constance, helping her to make a small bouquet from a magnificent cluster of choice flowers which he had brought her. There is no occupation so graceful and becoming as that of arranging flowers—to a pretty woman at least ; but Constance, quite unconscious that she was looking very charming, went on selecting, and grouping, and throwing some aside, until she had finished her own and her mamma's nosegay ; while Mr. Forde and Captain Bohun and her cousin stood watching her.

"Now which is the best of these two," said she raising her eyes to Mr. Forde ;

“ take time to consider, because you know it is a very important subject.”

Mr. Forde stooped down and whispered something to her ; she blushed and laughed, and shook her head. Nonsense, I dare say it was, or he would have said it out loud. However, she gave him a moss rose-bud, and went to fasten one in her papa's coat, and presented one of the bouquets to her mamma, and asked to be praised for tying it up so nicely, and then returned to her seat.

“ Are we to be excluded ?” asked Eustace in his usual tone.

“ Eh ?” said Constance rather sharply.

He repeated the question a little more clearly.

“ Now I hear,” said she. Captain Bohun smiled. Constance caught his eye and nearly laughed out. “ It is a great deal more than you deserve,” said she, giving him a flower ; “ but, however, here is to your speedy amendment, and wishing you may leave off smoking at your earliest con-

venience: is that the way they propose toasts in *your's*?"

"Our's don't generally drink toasts, I think," said Eustace.

"Tee-totallers perhaps!" returned Constance. Eustace warmly endeavoured to exculpate his regiment from so heinous a charge. Constance turned to Captain Bohun and offered him a beautiful rose in silence.

He thanked her, and asked if she had ever studied the language of flowers.

"Not one word," said she, "of that French nonsense that was published some time ago, that unnatural attempt to pervert flowers from their real meaning; but they have a language to people who are fond of them—a morality, a poetry, and all our homely English flowers are registered by our early poets in fragments that must make the literature of the whole world seem poor beside them."

"I didn't know, Constance, that you were romantic," said Eustace.

"Don't regret it," said Constance; "it

was ignorance on your part, certainly ; but still don't be sorry, because when one thinks that you've been all the way to Malta and back again, one feels what a number of things you must know ; what with the government house, and the churches, and the orange trees, and the barracks, you must have come home stored with such a quantity of facts and ideas that for my part I'm quite afraid of you."

Eustace did not exactly understand his cousin, but he had a vague idea that she admired him very much, perhaps not quite so much this time as the last, because he did not happen to have his uniform on ; still there was no doubt he was an officer all the same, and he only hoped she recollected that circumstance ; but before he had quite made up his mind, dinner was announced, and Constance glided past him on Mr. Forde's arm, leaving him to bring up the rear with Master Edgar.

CHAPTER IX.

I was proud :
 I did prevail with one whose youth and beauty
 Deserved a choice more suitable in both :
 Love drove the bargain, and the truth of love
 Confirmed it, I conceived.

THE LADY'S TRIAL.

Yes, yes ! that boon, life's richest treat
 He had, or fancied that he had—
 Say, 'twas but in his own conceit,
 The fancy made him glad.

* * * * *

The fair fulfilment of his poesy,
 When his young heart first yearn'd for sympathy !

COLERIDGE.

It cannot be supposed that Lady Hernshaw continued during this time in a state of inactivity. On the contrary, she was forwarding her daughter's interests by every means in her power.

She encouraged Lord Bevis ; she terrified Isabel ; and she instructed Sir George to be ready with his consent and blessing at any moment that they might be asked. So well did she prepare things, that a very short time elapsed before Lord Bevis demanded an interview with Sir George, and made a formal tender of his hand, which was as formally accepted. Sir George lost not an instant in communicating the welcome news to his lady, and she proceeded instantly, in a state of great exultation to her daughter's dressing-room, whom she found under the hands of her maid completing rather a late morning toilet, the result of a very late ball the night before.

“Josephine, you may go,” said Lady Hernshaw.

The maid disappeared instantly.

Isabel selected a brooch from her jewel-box, and began to fasten it very carefully into her dress.

“Lord Bevis is here, love,” said her Ladyship.

"Dear, how early he comes!" said Isabel. "I thought I should have had time to finish this novel. I prefer it infinitely to his conversation."

"You must not say so now," said Lady Hernshaw; "he has just proposed to your father, and has been accepted."

This delightful intelligence produced a violent burst of tears from Isabel, and these in turn called forth a series of bitter upbraidings from her mother.

"Ungrateful creature!" she exclaimed; "is this the only means that suggests itself to you of thanking me for my assiduity? Would you have ever received this splendid proposal, I wonder, but for my care?"

"I cannot be grateful, mamma," said Isabel through her tears, "I cannot love Lord Bevis."

"I should be obliged to you to inform me," said her Ladyship, taking her seat with much dignity in an arm chair just opposite to her daughter, "who ever expressed the

slightest wish that you should love Lord Bevis? I believe I never required it of you."

"No, mamma," replied Isabel;" but if I could—"

"I really hope that your very expensive education has not been so utterly wasted," said Lady Hernshaw, "that you mean to indulge in the village vulgarities of a regular sweetheart. I trust I did not pay two hundred a-year to Mademoiselle Bertine to teach you to *fall in love* like a milk-maid."

"I learned, I do think, falsehood enough from her to content you," said Isabel, struggling with her tears.

"There's your poor father," said Lady Hernshaw, shifting her mode of attack, "rejoicing over your good fortune; an event which may prove very useful to him when he happens to be a little distressed for ready money. Your Lord has more than he can possibly want."

"Am I to be sold then?" exclaimed Isabel, roused for a moment into anger; "for—for—"

She knew too well that anger would avail her nothing, and sat down in mute despondency, leaning her arm on her toilet, and turning her head from her mother that she might not perceive her emotion.

"If you will kindly inform me, Miss Hernshaw," said her Ladyship coldly, "when those tears are likely to cease, I will then return for you ; don't hurry, on any account. Lord Bevis is waiting in the library to receive you ; but he will only the better prepare his raptures for your condescension by this short delay."

"He will not treat me as my mother does," thought Isabel ; " I will escape from this even to him."

She dried her eyes, and turning to the glass, arranged the rich folds of her pale silk dress, while her mother adjusted her beautiful lace collerette, and then they went smiling down stairs hand in hand.

"I have brought this poor, silly, frightened girl with me, my Lord," said Lady Hernshaw, "that she may tell you what

I know she feels, naturally with more effect than I can do."

She placed her daughter's hand in that of Lord Bevis and left the room.

Now Isabel expected a burst of joyful thanks, such as she had received on several occasions, and she schooled herself accordingly ; but when Lord Bevis, still holding her hands in his, preserved a long and absolute silence, with his melancholy eyes fixed full upon her, she became totally unnerved, and suddenly breaking away from him, she threw herself upon a sofa and burst again into tears.

" Isabel !" said Lord Bevis, seating himself beside her. She looked up. He seemed to have taken a desperate resolve and hurried on. " I hardly dare to interpret your emotion ; but, if you would shew mercy to me, tell me at once whether you can love me. Believe me, it will be with no surprise that I shall hear your sentence, if, as I fear, it is unfavourable to my hopes. I cannot expect to win you. Now, with

your hand in mine, your mother's voice in my ear that seemed to give you to me, I do believe I never can attain your heart. Yet, stay ; perhaps you have not thought that while your exquisite beauty might purchase from other men the divided homage of a few short years, I devote to you the whole affections of a heart in which no other idol has ever reigned for an instant. Can these weigh with you against those graces in which I know myself deficient ? Will time—I do not press for a speedy answer ; will any thing—”

Isabel had hastily brushed the tears from her eyes, and sat listening ; and when through his agitation he ceased to speak, she collected her thoughts, and knew that she must make him some reply.

She felt that she dared not refuse him ; her mother would never forgive her : she was unhappy enough now, but then her condition would be insupportable. She felt no sympathy for his condition, and very little gratitude for his love. All

the best feelings of the heart cannot be long stifled with impunity; but she knew that wealth and luxury were certain to attend her as the wife of Lord Bevis, and though she trembled as she surveyed him, she made an effort and began,

“My Lord, I feel that—”

But here some remembrance seemed to cross her mind, and she paused.

“You have but to say one word,” said Lord Bevis; “to banish me from your presence for ever, perhaps broken-hearted, but still more content than if by my success I caused you an instant’s pain.”

Isabel was touched a little; she even thought it would be wrong to trifle with such earnest affection, it would be better to undeceive him at once. She rose, but as she was about to speak she heard her mother’s footsteps pass the door, not as if about to enter, but the very sound recalled her to a sense of her obligations; she turned to Lord Bevis who stood beside her, as pale as marble.

"If," she said softly, and extending her hand as she spoke, "you can value any thing so unworthy—"

She felt that he clasped her to his heart ; she heard him pouring forth his thanks and blessings in a voice that seemed to her far distant : confused by the sickness of her brain and heart, she sat with all the feelings that announce the approach of fainting, yet without the relief of utter insensibility.

CHAPTER X.

Thou fairest, yet the falsest woman
That ever broke man's heart-strings !

THE NICE VALOUR.

Of love good friends this is my rede
Howe'er secure you seem to be,
All joy may in a moment flee ;
Mine seemed all joy and truth, by Heaven,
Yet lasted not a whole day even :
'Tis, where nought is sure, sheer folly
In false love to trust so wholly.

BERNARD OF VENTADOUR.

“ARE you not happy, Constance ?” said Isabel.

She had been drinking tea at the rectory ; for now that her marriage was arranged, Lady Hernshaw set no bounds to her indulgence, and allowed her to see as much of her friend as was compatible with the demand

Lord Bevis made upon her society, and they had strolled out in the cool evening. Isabel and Constance, Mr. Forde and Edgar, and the two friends were now seated under a cluster of tall elms, having sent on their escort to gather flowers from the tangled hedge that skirted a neighbouring park, and ran along one side of the narrow lane down which they had walked, the rosy hues of the fading hawthorns proclaiming that the scent had departed, and the straying branches of honey-suckle and sweet-briar filling the cool air with delicious perfume.

"Are you not quite happy, Constance?" she repeated.

"I am, indeed," said Constance, rousing herself from a reverie which the absolute stillness of the air had brought on; "I can scarcely believe my happiness. There is only one subject on which I feel anxious, and that is your engagement with—"

"Oh! but, dear Constance, set your mind at rest," said Isabel; "I never ex-

pected you know to marry a person whom I liked ; I knew mamma would not let me choose, and she might have done worse for me. But you are a miracle, Constance ! the course of your true love seems to run so smooth."

" Oh ! I hope it may not be too smooth," said Constance. " I cannot tell you, Isabel, how devoted he seems to me, and I have nothing but an honest heart ; surely, men are never won and retained by that alone."

" You are looking so pretty just now, Constance," said her friend, " with your bright hair just ruffled, giving such a dim radiance to your head and face, and that carmine colour mounting softly up as you talk, you are yourself the best answer to your doubts."

" Ay, Isabel, you can afford to be generous," said Constance, smiling as she turned her eyes upon her friend, who, in all the languid grace of her surpassing beauty, had fallen into a position from which a sculptor might have drawn inspiration.

"There is something very pleasant in a coronet," said Isabel, after a short silence. "I shall have it embroidered on every thing I possess. I had better make the most of a toy that I shall purchase so dearly."

"Oh, Isabel," said Constance, "a word from you would set you free at once."

"Ah! that is a very weak argument," returned her friend; "it may be as difficult to speak one word as to break through iron bars sometimes; and you are not very considerate to Lord Bevis either, who is always so pleased when he hears I am going to see you, thinking, and with some reason too, that you have a share of your good father's excellence. I have settled one thing, Constance," she continued, "and that is, that we will both be married on the same day; so recollect. I am sure you would not oppose me in such a trifle; and then you will see my Lord, and what a gratification that will be! Oh, here comes Mr. Forde and Edgar, and somebody they have picked

up by the way ! I hope a pleasant addition to our party ; for you, no offence, my dear Constance, contrive to monopolize the eyes and conversation of your faithful swain. Oh, thank you, Mr. Forde what delicious honey-suckle !”

Constance was wondering at the sudden change in her friend's manner, so different from what she could herself assume, when she saw Isabel stop short, change colour, and look breathlessly towards the gentleman who was coming leisurely along with Edgar. It was Captain Bohun.

“ He must still be attached to her,” thought Constance, “ he is always about the neighbourhood.”

Captain Bohun had a small pocket-book open in his hand, and Edgar was looking over the contents as they came slowly up. Flies for fishing they seemed to be.

“ It is the best I know,” she heard him say, as he joined them ; “ I don't think trout would rise to any other, at least in this month.”

"Oh, yes!" cried Edgar, "there's a very pretty fly Tom Barlow makes, which he says beats every thing for trout; he lives at the mill, the boy with only one leg."

"Good evening, Miss D'Oyley," said Captain Bohun raising his hat to her. He glanced at Miss Hernshaw as if not quite decided whether he was acquainted with her or not; and then making her a slight bow turned again to Edgar.

"We must call upon this Barlow when next we go out fishing," he said.

Constance just stole a look at Isabel. Her face was suffused with a burning blush, which faded completely away and left her as pale as marble.

"But I don't know him myself," said Edgar; "he told a fellow about his flies, who told Tim: that's the way I heard of them."

"Will you introduce us, Forde?" asked Captain Bohun.

"I am sorry I am not acquainted with the individual," said Mr. Forde, throwing him-

self on the grass just at the feet of Constance.

"I am the only person competent to introduce you," said Constance. "I am on bowing, almost on speaking terms with Master Barlow, who, by the bye, is not much older than Edgar; his mother is a very old gossip of mine."

"I shall be so much obliged to you," said Captain Bohun.

Constance tried to find out whether he was looking at Isabel; but he was leaning against a tree turning over the flies in his book, and as far as she could judge not even thinking of any thing else.

"Bohun, are you likely to be ordered abroad this autumn?" asked Mr. Forde.

"Not that I know of," he replied.

"There, that's a brown backle!" said Edgar, stopping his hand.

"*That* is—genuine," said Captain Bohun.

"Do you think Colonel Bohun would retire if your regiment was sent out of the country again?" said Mr. Forde.

"No;" said Captain Bohun, with a

slight laugh, "nothing would ever make him retire ; he is so fond of his profession."

"Which is not your case?"

"Not unless there was something doing," he replied.

"Has Sir Guy any children?" asked Mr. Forde.

"Not as yet ;" returned Captain Bohun.

"What sort of a woman is Lady Bohun?"

"Much like other women," replied Captain Bohun quietly.

"I wonder what that means?" said Constance, looking up and laughing.

"In the first place, Miss D'Oyley," said Captain Bohun coming nearer to her, - and speaking in a lower tone, "it means something as unlike you as possible."

"I don't consider that as a compliment at all," replied Constance ; "a woman's best quality is to resemble her sex."

The party rose to continue their walk ; Constance made a sign to Mr. Forde to offer his arm to Isabel. She fell back with Edgar, and Captain Bohun walked by her side.

“ You do not ask after your cousin, Miss D'Oyley,” he said, after a short pause.

“ Tell him I did not,” replied Constance, “ it may do him some good. But have you been fishing this evening, that I meet you in this part of the world ?”

“ No,” he replied ; “ I have been dining with my father at Mr. Wyndham's, the owner you know of that old house that stands within the park yonder, and I stole out to take a walk while the old gentlemen were dozing over their claret.”

Constance was wishing very much to let him know that her friend had no share in his rejection ; but then, if he had outlived his attachment, how forward, how indelicate would such a communication appear ! She wished that he would say something that could lead to such a topic ; but the next remark he made was on the beauty of the rising moon, which now appeared shining, all silver, behind a screen of young beech trees, that lay below them in the park adjoining.

"How very dark the beech always looks by moonlight, darker than any' other foliage," remarked Constance.

Captain Bohun did not appear to hear the observation, though he paused, as if to give her an opportunity of enjoying the scene.

Mr. Forde and Isabel were strolling up the lane, and Edgar had been searching the banks for glow worms ; and having found one, was securing it in sycamore leaves for the purpose of taking it home.

"Miss D'Oyley," said Captain Bohun turning abruptly to her, "I fear you may think me impertinent in what I am about to say, but it is so impossible to behold you without interest, that I venture at the risk of offending you, to warn you against too affectionate an intimacy with Miss Hershaw. I have the highest opinion of my friend Forde, but a beautiful girl who makes a system of conquest is a most dangerous minister to the vanity of our sex. I think you know how truly I have cause to say so much ; but believe my

assurance, that I am by no means the only sufferer by her hollow fascinations."

"Oh, stop," said Constance, "I so much wished to tell you, but feared to do so, I may now, I think—that Isabel had no part in that affair: you do not know how completely she is in her mother's power. You have no idea of Lady Hernshaw's tyranny in such matters."

He shook his head. Constance traced an incredulous smile on his face.

"It is but lately," he said, "that in very idleness she engaged the affections of a man whom she knew to be affianced to a young lady, her friend, as the phrase goes; a man whom she never dreamed of accepting when she estranged him from the innocent woman she wronged."

"She is so very beautiful," said Constance faintly.

"Is that a plea," he asked, "that she should enact the serpent?"

"I only meant that it might be involuntary," said Constance.

"Believe my honour that there is nothing involuntary in Miss Hernshaw's coquetry," replied Captain Bohun. "I speak from sad experience, and through an admiration of your candour that leads me, I am afraid, too far to intrude upon your patience."

"I am sure it is very kindly meant," said Constance, turning sick at heart, not from any apprehension of her own danger, but from distress at the imputations cast upon her friend; "but I think you judge her rather sternly—men always do—that is, they have not so much opportunity, I mean," said poor Constance, getting more and more confused, "you attribute to her the defects of her education, and her mother—"

"She's a dreadful old woman certainly," said Captain Bohun in a lighter tone, for he saw the embarrassment of Constance; "only," he added, "I should be more sorry than our slight acquaintance would seem to warrant if you were to trust too implicitly to Miss Hernshaw's friendship."

“Even,” said Constance with some hesitation, “if your worst anticipations should be correct, I should rejoice in it so far, that immeasurably as I know myself her inferior, I would not consent to accept a blind preference from any one, but would demand to be singled out from the whole world, in presence even of such creatures as Isabel Hernshaw.”

As she spoke, he looked full in her face with that expression of answering intelligence which must be of such rare occurrence, when mind meets mind, and the sympathies of a character are all aroused by the disclosure of some feeling congenial to themselves. Constance felt her heart beat as she dropped her eyes on the ground. And she, what reason had she for unfolding so much of her sentiments? She did not know; but the soft and subdued moonlight does sometimes call out things from young hearts which would otherwise remain unsaid.

“At least forgive me for my interference,” said he holding out his hand.

She took it; and not being very well able to speak, for it was one thing to talk about resigning Mr. Forde, and another thing to feel that she might be put to the trial, she made a sign that they should overtake their companions.

They were leaning against a little wicket gate waiting their arrival.

"I am afraid you are tired," said Mr. Forde, coming to the side of Constance.

"No; but what can we do but loiter," said Constance, "beneath such a moon?"

"Bohun, do you remember the moon on the Mediterranean?" asked Mr. Forde.

"Perfectly; but I hope you don't mean to say that their moonlight is better than ours."

"Not better? nor their gorgeous sunsets?"

"I own that I prefer the more delicate tints in our grey climate," said Captain Bohun.

"To think of owning such a thing!"

exclaimed Mr. Forde ; " I like them better myself, but I never own it."

" Is it not growing late ?" said Isabel. They were the first words she had spoken before Captain Bohun. Constance started at her tone.

" It is indeed," replied Mr. Forde ; " we must be moving homewards, unless you really wish to enact the Lady in Comus, as you said just now, and then we will leave you behind to

—awake the courteous echo,
To give you answer from her mossy couch.

" No," said Isabel, " I can enact nothing to-night, I am too weary." She leaned upon Constance as she spoke.

" The shortest way to your house," said Captain Bohun, addressing Constance, " is that steep bridle-path that skirts the wood."

" Thank you," said Constance : Isabel did not speak.

"This is my way," he said, pushing open the wicket.

"Recollect that you dine with me on Wednesday," said Mr. Forde.

"I will not forget. Good evening."

He raised his hat to the ladies, and turned into the shrubberies that led towards the house.

"I dare say," said Edgar, "that the two old fellows will have drunk up all the claret before he gets back."

"Why, you greedy boy," said Constance, "do you suppose Captain Bohun would care about it?"

"I should," said Edgar; "there's nothing like a good glass of Lafitte this hot weather."

"That comes straight from Eustace," said Constance; "there's all his conceit, almost his lisp in your manner. What business have you these ten years to come to know claret from hock?"

"Eustace says that at his mess—"

"Don't let me hear you," said Constance;

“Eustace never said a good thing that I recollect. Oh! we are close at home, run on and open the door: I am so glad for your sake, Isabel.”

As they entered she felt her hand grasped by her friend. “You are right,” whispered Isabel, “I—I can be forgotten, Constance.”

CHAPTER XI.

I, under fair pretence of friendly ends
And well placed words of glozing courtesy,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares.

COMUS.

It seemed to Constance that as soon as Isabel found she had lost all power over the heart of Captain Bohun, she became much more reconciled to her intended marriage. She even spoke sometimes in praise of Lord Bevis, and related from time to time some instance of his generosity which she had heard, or some proof of his talent, of which she seemed to entertain a very exalted idea. She laughed when she mentioned the jewels he was in the habit of giving her, and said that they made her

mamma worship him ; but Constance saw that they had no little influence on her own opinion. She said one day that she was very anxious for the marriage to take place, and asked Constance to guess the reason.

Constance said, " she hoped that she was now so sensible of the good qualities of Lord Bevis, that she was enabled to return his regard."

" No," said Isabel, laughing, " I could not do that, I should have so much to return. The fact is, I see a great deal too much of him ; he is hanging about our house half the day. Now, when we are married, I hope we shall see very little of each other. I shall take care to be at his town-house all the season, giving splendid parties, which he hates ; and I think I shall make out the rest of the year at a watering-place."

" Dear Isabel," said Constance, " I wish you would not jest upon such matters. Do you know, though I am sure your heart is

too good to put them into effect, it makes me quite uncomfortable to hear you planning such things."

"Well," said Isabel, laughing, "time will show ; but he is a bold man."

"In what respect, Isabel?"

"In marrying a pretty wife, who does not care for him in the least."

"Does he know it?" asked Constance.

"No ; I acquit him there," returned Isabel ; "he goes blindfold into the snare as ever poor bird did."

Constance was silent ; she was deeply pained.

"Constance," said Isabel, taking both her hands, "whatever faults I commit now, whatever I may commit, blame mamma and not me ; promise that you will."

"I don't like to blame anybody, dear," said Constance.

"Yes, but do not blame me. You are the only person I love ; and you must not think ill of me ; you must come and see me in town. Berkeley Square

I think the house is in, but I'll ask my Lord, next time I see him ; and then I shall be alone, with some old aunt of his to *chaperon* me, whom I'll find out by that time ; and we shall be so happy !”

“ I'll not come to see you, if you are not with Lord Bevis,” said Constance. “ You said, very rightly, that a beautiful woman is not safe away from her husband, especially if she is not much attached to him.”

“ Did I say so ?—you mischievous creature, how you turn my words against me !” said Isabel. “ Well, then, I'll be very good, and pin Lord Bevis to my apron string. I'm sure he wouldn't object to the situation. By the bye, I wish one wore aprons now. Mamma was looking out some lace the other day, and she found one of old point which had belonged to her grandmother ; such a beauty !”

Constance had often wondered at the rapid transitions in which her friend indulged, but never more than now. How-

ever, she said, "that aprons of point-lace must have been very handsome, and very expensive;" and then there was a short pause, during which Isabel made great progress in her worsted work, and Constance hemmed away very soberly at a muslin frill.

"I am so glad mamma lets me come here so much," said Isabel; "I think that, but for such a relief, I should grow restive, and turn off my Lord altogether. Only fancy mamma's face at such a crisis!—think of her sitting deliberately down to pack up all the sapphires and emeralds. She says my trinket box would look well for a duchess: only imagine her returning them!"

"Oh, Isabel!" said Constance, very gently, "you should not laugh at your mamma."

"What a good girl you are, Constance," said Isabel, gaily; "but there is Mr. Forde riding up the road as if he were pursued by the furies. There are two things, you see, which make a man ride fast, pursuit

and prospect ; but which is the strongest inducement, I cannot tell you exactly ; I wish I could. Well, really mamma is right : Mr. Forde is very handsome ; and he is one of those persons who look best at a distance."

Constance smiled faintly : she thought for a moment of Captain Bohun's warning.

The thought vanished, however, when Mr. Forde entered, all animation, with his daily offering of choice flowers, her favourite ones, too, which he had gathered himself, or said he had, to the utter dismay of the gardener.

Isabel marked the lingering pressure of his hand, as he spoke to Constance, the affectionate tone of his common morning salutation, the eagerness with which he helped her to arrange her flowers. A thought, not exactly defined, came into her mind, that she should like to interest him—not to annoy or wound her dear Constance, but only to make him a little

more aware of her presence—just a little more polite to her than he was when Constance was by.

But in this laudable endeavour she seemed to make but little progress ; she entangled her worsted, indeed, and complained of it ; but Mr. Forde was amusing himself with putting the work-box of Constance in complete disorder. She rose and went to the piano, and then he exerted himself to follow her, and place a music-book ; but he returned to his seat, and never heard a word of her song. So Isabel gave up the attempt, and generally chose such times for her visits, when she knew he was certain to be absent from the rectory.

Meanwhile, time passed ; flew, as Constance thought. She had never been so happy—never in her life so important. Nobody could call at the rectory without asking to see her ; no one was the object of attention when she was present. She could not have a headache without such pity and good

wishes, and even inquiries, which she might have died without exciting at any other time. And the gentlemen, how lovely they thought her, now that somebody had thought so first ! What a " nice creature " she was called ; how they admired her eyes and hair, and hands and feet ! If she had been a horse worth a hundred guineas, she could not have raised more discussion.

Her eldest brother passed the long vacation at Oxford. Edgar in due time returned to school. The summer passed, the autumn hurried on ; and Mr. Forde, who had been anything but patient during the intervening months, now became urgent that some time should be named for their marriage. Isabel still insisted that she herself and her friend should be married on the same day ; and after the usual difficulties and consultations, it was agreed that both marriages should take place early in December. Previous to this happy event, however, it was requisite that Mr. Forde should spend some

weeks in town, to arrange certain matters of business ; and Miss Hernshaw persuaded her mother, that they must also pass some time there, to superintend the more important affair of wedding dresses.

CHAPTER XII.

For thereof comes all goodness and all worth
All gentleness and honour thence come forth :
Thence worship comes, content, and true heart's pleasure,
And full assured trust, joy without measure,
And jollity, fresh cheerfulness, and mirth.

CHAUCER.

It was a fine frosty morning ; Constance had been out walking with Mr. Forde, and on returning to the house they saw a carriage drawn up before the door. Tim was holding Mr. Forde's horse very valiantly by the nose, while his groom was carrying on an instructive conversation with the coachman respecting the appearance of his cattle, which his master's arrival broke off somewhat abruptly.

Mr. Forde would not go in, but he did

not seem anxious to go away either. He stood about, asking Constance a hundred unimportant questions ; now replacing her boa more closely about her throat, now declaring that he was keeping her in the cold, and still finding something that he had not said, and could not leave her for a whole week without saying.

"I think you like frosty weather?"

"Oh, yes !—It puts me in such spirits."

"You are looking so well to-day."

"Nonsense !" said Constance, turning away her head.

"I have told Gilbert to send you carnations every day."

"Thank you."

"Miss Constance !" was shouted from the other end of the walk.

"I am wanted," said Constance, trying to get her hand away.

"One moment. Is there anything—"

"Nothing in the world that you can do for me in town. Good bye !"

"Well but—shake hands ;—good bye !"

“ There ;—take care of yourself.”

“ And you—”

“ Of course ; I always do,” said Constance, laughing, “ Good bye, again.”

“ Mr. Thornton and Mrs. Parker are in the drawing-room, Miss,” said Tim, approaching Constance as she stood watching Mr. Forde ride off, in happy forgetfulness that she had ever been sent for.

“ Mrs. Parker—oh, dear !” said Constance, turning her steps towards the house.

Mrs. Parker was a little woman verging on seventy, plain, but expensive in her dress, and eccentric in her manners. She had a smooth voice almost resembling a lisp, and those perpetual curves about the mouth which denote pretty clearly a smiling hypocrisy.

“ This is your daughter, Margaret ?” said Mrs. Parker, taking the hand of Constance in both her's. “ And very like you she is ; sweet creature ! And Edgar too, dear fellow, you look so well, all of you ! Edgar has his father's nose, Mrs. D'Oyley ?”

"Do you think so, aunt?" returned Mrs. D'Oyley.

"Constance is very like her grandfather," said Mr. Thornton surveying her through his spectacles.

"Like her grandfather!—oh! no, dear brother," cried Mrs. Parker, afraid that this idea might interest Mr. Thornton in her behalf; "Margaret never was thought like the Thorntons, and Constance is her image."

"I say she is," maintained uncle Thornton, "so come hither, Constance, I want you to spend a few days with me at mother Parker's. Don't be afraid—with me, not her. I'll take care of you."

"Well, I really should like that, uncle," said Constance.

"That's right, then; I shall have you at last. The only one of my relations I ever needed to press.

"Ay, but then, uncle, I am the only one—no, I won't be vain."

"The only one worth having, I suppose,"

said uncle Thornton, laughing heartily. "Take care you don't turn out like the parson's horse,—hard to catch, and then—you know the proverb."

"Constance, dear, come and talk with me a little," said Mrs. Parker, "I have a word to say to you."

"Say it out, then, sister Parker," cried Mr. Thornton.

"No, no, brother," said Mrs. Parker, assuming a playful air. "You see, my dear," she whispered, "it would be the greatest treat to me to have you in the spring, perhaps ;—but just now my house is so full :—there's Frederick just returned from his wedding tour—brought wife and lady's maid, and valet, and grooms—

"Oh ! certainly, aunt. I should be very sorry to intrude ; uncle, I will come and see you another time, when aunt Parker's house is less crowded."

"Nonsense !" exclaimed Mr. Thornton, (Mrs. Parker's face became a very fine study for an artist). "Come *now* ;—there's

room for twenty people at Fulham. Sister Parker will be delighted—”

She looked so, to be sure !

“ Oh ! yes,” she said, “ if dear Constance wouldn't mind—”

“ Mind a house full of company ?—Why, what girl does ? Were you ever young, sister Parker ? Come hither, Sir ; what book do you read in Latin ?”

“ Horace, Sir,” said Edgar, looking very uncomfortable.

“ Have you begun Greek ?”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ Uncle !” suggested Mrs. D'Oyley.

“ Yes, uncle,” repeated Edgar.

“ Are you in Euclid ?

“ Yes, uncle.”

Mr. Thornton proceeded to put several other questions usually addressed to school-boys, on the same principle that leads people to talk of pictures to an artist, or books to an author, simply because they would prefer conversing upon any other

topic. At last he rose to depart, and Mrs. Parker directly bustled about to find her gloves and her bag, and her boa, and to take a most touching leave of Mrs D'Oyley and Constance, a little in the style of an eternal farewell upon the stage.

“To-morrow the carriage shall be sent for you, Constance,” said uncle Thornton as he took his leave; “I shall be looking out for you about dinner time, and sister Parker will not have been so happy a long while, she'll tell you.”

“Dear brother, what a droll man you are!” said Mrs. Parker, as they left the room.

“Yes, that will just do, mamma,” said Constance, “Mr. Forde will be absent a week, and this day week I shall be at home again;—and I don't talk about leaving you for a few days, because our's will not deserve to be called a parting, so near as we shall be. You will have me running down every day to do all papa's writing and all your needlework.”

"Ah! my child, you don't know yet;" said Mrs. D'Oyley, kissing her.

"I'm sure, unless Mr. Forde tells fibs, I am to do just as I please," said Constance, gaily; "but look, it is beginning to snow, we shall have an early winter, and papa, I am afraid, will come home very cold."

The next morning, the snow continued, but the carriage came at the proper time; she stepped into it and was whirled off.

It was dusk when she arrived at Mrs. Parker's villa. A foreign servant came to the carriage door to help her to alight.

"*Beaucoup de neige, Mademoiselle—beaucoup, beaucoup,*" he said, by way of caution, as she mounted the slippery steps; an English servant, by the way, would have allowed her to fall if she had not come in her own carriage, and then have enjoyed a hearty laugh over it with his fellows.

It was time to dress for dinner. The foreign servant gave her into the care of an English one, who delivered her over to

a lady's maid, under whose auspices she made her toilet.

Constance thought that people who lived in a style inferior to that which she saw around her, were more courteous and comfortable in their modes of reception; but this was a vulgar idea, and I beg my readers not to repeat it.

As soon as she was dressed, she was shewn into the drawing-room where Mr. Thornton was seated in an easy chair by the fire, and Frederick Parker leaning on the chimney-piece opposite, looking extremely cross and disagreeable. Mr. Thornton rose and welcomed her with extreme cordiality, and introduced her to young Parker, who honoured her with a stiff bend of the head, and a scowl from under his black brows something like that of a disappointed bandit. Mr. Thornton drew her chair close to his; when young Parker renewed the conversation which her entrance had interrupted, by saying in a loud, rough voice, "I tell you, Sir, if you build

a conservatory on that side of the house, you will ruin Leyton altogether."

"I told you, Sir," returned uncle Thornton, (Constance, my dear, take a screen) "that Hoskins had seen my plans and said I could not possibly do better."

They were here interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Parker, who, with one hand tucked behind her, and her head stooping forwards, her favourite attitude, came up to Constance, and kissing her, uttered some sleek words of welcome.

"I don't call Hoskins anything of an architect," said Mr. Frederick in the same rough tone, "I only know at Rome—"

"You are a noodle, Sir," replied Mr. Thornton sharply; "Rome is one thing, and Herefordshire another thing, I presume."

"I know, at Rome," pursued young Parker endeavouring to talk through his uncle, "the great architect Alderoni—"

"Should never come near my premises, Sir, take my word for that," cried Mr.

Thornton. "I hate French fops, Sir. Where's Mrs. Frederick? And oh! ring the bell and see why they don't send up dinner, unless," said he, turning short round, "they are all gone to meeting, sister Parker."

Now Mrs. Parker was in the opinion of many people, herself included, a very devout attendant at religious meetings, and this was a constant subject of contention between her and her brother, who abhorred dissent, and held that salvation out of the pale of the Church of England was a vague chimera of which people would be convinced to their cost by and by.

"No, brother," said Mrs. Parker with her smooth voice, to all appearance unruffled; "Thursday is not meeting night."

"Why, ring then," said Mr. Thornton, shaking his hand impatiently at young Parker, "and ask them whether the cobbler teaches them that it's a sin to dine o' Thursdays. On Sundays, I know, he advocates starvation."

He never would designate the dissenting minister by any other name than the cobbler ; having heard, to his exquisite delight, that he had formerly been a shoemaker ; and yet this disrespectful mention of her pet preacher, Mrs. Parker bore for the sake of the thousands she hoped to reap at her brother's death ; although she had wealth even to overflowing.

"Frederick, take your mother," said Mr. Thornton, securing the hand of Constance, "I attend to my own guests. Are you cold, child ?—The dining-room strikes like a well."

Mrs. Frederick had not yet made her appearance ; she could not bear to be waited for, neither could she bear to be punctual ; however, before the soup was removed, she walked in, all satin, lace, and pearls ; looking, had her train been a little longer, as if she had just come from a drawing-room. The foreign servant pulled her chair back for her, and replied to her "*prenex*," as she

threw her cashmere on his arm, with a most obsequious bow.

Now Frederick Parker spoke very bad French, and it was the delight and glory of his valet to speak a very little very bad English ; and they conversed at intervals during dinner something in this manner :

“ *Nicole quel temps fait-il à present ?* ”

“ Oh ! very bad time, Sare ; the snow is foot dip.”

“ *Comment donc ? Encore plus de niege ?* ”

“ Frightful time ! frightful,” said the valet, with something between a shrug and a shiver.

Constance smiled at his translation of *temps affreux*, and turned her eyes upon Mrs. Frederick, who having honoured her with such a steady stare that proved she had not weak eyes, had now withdrawn her attention to her dinner. She was a little, fair woman, extremely dressed, and rather pretty. She was afflicted with very large hands, which she covered with rings ; and

having been long abroad, she took upon herself to do exactly as she liked, thinking that people would fancy everything she did was foreign, and admire it accordingly.

"Caroline, try this vol-au-vent," said Mr. Frederick to his wife; "I think you'll like it."

"I—yes," she replied. The dish was taken to her and she helped herself.

"Take it back," said she to the foreign servant; "I can't endure rice." Her plate was removed.

Now Constance had never seen a vol-au-vent without rice, and thought Mrs. Frederick might have decided at once; but then Constance had never been to Rome.

"Take something else," said Mr. Frederick.

"No, I'll wait," she replied.

"Look here, Constance," said Mr. Thornton when the second course was put upon table, "when I was a boy, pheasants were plucked before they came to table; now they send them up with their tails dabbling

in the gravy. Mrs. Frederick, some pheasant?"

"If you please."

"Time you took something," muttered Mr. Thornton.

When she went into the drawing-room, Constance felt very lonely. Mrs. Parker began to knit and Mrs. Frederick sank into a large chair with a French novel in her hand, and her Italian greyhound nestled by her side.

Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Frederick were not on very loving terms and no conversation ensued. Coffee was served up: Mrs. Frederick took a cup and sent it away untasted, and asked for wafers, and was told there were none, and ordered a cup of black tea *unmixed*, and then went to sleep till the gentlemen came in, having taken out her pearl comb and given it to the greyhound to play with.

"Are you tired, Mrs. Frederick?" said uncle Thornton as he passed her chair.

"Dreadfully so," she said.

"I hope you mean to give us a little music," said Mr. Frederick.

"Presently," said his wife.

"Constance, dear, do you play?" asked Mrs. Parker.

"I can accompany myself; nothing more," she said.

"Come then, Constance," said Mr. Thornton, "give me an English song; it will be quite a treat to me."

"But uncle, I can't sing any popular music," said Constance.

"So much the better," he said; "give me something of Handel's."

Constance sat down and sang a favourite song of her father's—"Come, ever smiling Liberty." She gave great effect to Handel's music which she thoroughly understood; and as she had a very fine voice, it was really a pleasure for some persons to hear her.

Mr. Thornton was very much delighted, and he praised her so much that Mrs. Parker looked very wretched. Then Mrs.

Frederick resolved not to be outdone, sat down to play something extravagantly difficult, which she very nearly managed to do, omitting, of course, all the delicacies of the composition, which must be the case when people attempt to execute what is above their power. As there seemed no end to her performance, Mr. Thornton drew Constance aside and offered to shew her the conservatory, as she seemed so fond of flowers. They slipped out together, and when they were fairly among the orange trees, Mr. Thornton, first relieving his mind by a sigh, asked her what she thought of Mrs. Frederick Parker.

“Oh, uncle!” said Constance, totally at a loss how to express her opinion.

Upon which her uncle patted her on the shoulder, and laughed heartily for some time.

“Constance, is this true,” he said at last, “this report that you are going to be married to young Forde?”

“What, you have heard it then?” she said quietly.

"That means *yes*, I suppose, that non-denial," said Mr. Thornton, quickly.

"Yes, uncle," replied Constance. "My marriage takes place so very shortly, that it would not be very sensible to deny it."

"When is it sensible to deny such things?" returned Mr. Thornton. "I hate all the mysterious nonsense that goes on with respect to marriages. For Heaven's sake, if you are not ashamed of each other, say so; and don't try to hide it like two great ostriches tucking their heads behind a tree, and thinking nobody sees them,—which is pretty much the case when your precious secret is bandied from mouth to mouth all over the county!"

"Well, uncle, you see I don't try to conceal it," said Constance, smiling. "Now, do you think I might have a little piece of this verbenä?"

Mr. Thornton broke off a branch for her, and went on.

"In your case, the next best thing to

owning your match, would be to slide out of it altogether."

"Sir?" exclaimed Constance in amazement.

"His house is not safe," returned Mr. Thornton.

Had this remark come from Mrs. Parker, who had rather an irreverent manner of quoting scripture phrases, Constance would have thought it referred to poor Mr. Forde's morals;—and as it was, she was obliged to reflect a little, before she recollected that he was connected with a famous mercantile house in the city.

"Oh, is that all!" she said, with a cheerful air.

"All!" cried Mr. Thornton, "I took you for a girl of sense;—there's no living without money."

"Not what you would call living, uncle!" said Constance, "but I know that Mr. Forde does not depend exclusively on the house you mention;—and I could be content, were such the case, on a very little.

There is no want of sense in consulting one's happiness, and if money could secure mine, I should be foolish indeed to risk the loss of it. But if Mr. Forde does not deceive me, he is no more dependant on externals than myself; and if he does, the loss of fortune would add but little to my regret."

"Why the girl can argue!" said Mr. Thornton, rubbing his spectacles, and putting them on that he might better survey such a phenomenon;—perhaps they enabled him to discern that there were tears in her eyes, for he added in an under tone, "She can feel too," and taking her hand, he said: "Well, well, my dear, it will all turn out right, I dare say. I'll keep my eye on you; he is a very honest young fellow by all accounts, and I hope will make you happy—at least he had better," this remark was given in another under tone of a rather threatening description. "So we'll go back to the drawing-room, or mother Parker will think I've been signing a new will."

This idea delighted him so much that he laughed until he reached the drawing-room door.

The evening wore away but slowly Constance was heartily glad when they retired. She was up betimes next morning, and going down into the breakfast room, found Mrs. Parker knitting by the side of the fire, and watching the kettle which was set on a stand fastened to the bars of the grate.

Mrs. Parker asked Constance if she used an urn or a kettle at home, and whether she ate toast or bread, and if they baked and churned, and brewed ; and if they had their washing done at home, or put out and then, by a transition which Constance was perfectly unable to follow, she began to question her respecting her father's views.

"Do you mean," said she, quite seriously, "that papa thinks it cheaper to have things done at home, rather than to put them out?"

"No, my dear," said Mrs. Parker, looking puzzled. "I—never mind; let us go to breakfast."

They breakfasted accordingly.

When they had nearly finished their meal, Mrs. Frederick descended, superbly dressed, and took her seat with a little bow, which might be foreign, but was hardly civil. She was pulling on a pair of gloves, which she found to be slightly spotted; and she began telling her Italian greyhound what a bad climate it was, and how her gloves had been spoiled. She asked the dog, if it didn't agree with her in disliking England, and if it had made a good breakfast. Of course, the dog would not have understood her if she had spoken English, so she had the consideration to address it in Italian. Mrs. Parker did not understand the language, it is true, but Constance did, which was more than Mrs. Frederick gave her credit for. She then rang the bell very loudly, and gave the obnoxious gloves to her maid, desiring her to bring down an-

other pair, after which she gave her dog some cream ; and then, without speaking a word, walked leisurely into the drawing-room, and began to practise music violently.

In the course of the morning, Mrs. Parker asked Constance to walk out with her, to which she readily agreed. The snow had ceased to fall, and it was a bright hard frost. Mrs. Frederick would not go out till after luncheon, and they put off their walk accordingly till such time as she thought proper to join them. She appeared wrapped in costly furs, gave a very intelligible look of disdain at Constance's bonnet, and then set off walking as fast as she could. She kept about fifty yards in advance of her companions ; and if she greatly exceeded that distance, she would turn round and wait till they came near, and then set off again.

After the walk there was a long interval of idleness, and then came the dressing bell and dinner. When they assembled

round the table, Mr. Frederick shouted these words to Constance: "Have you been walking to-day, Miss D'Oyley?" which are worthy of being recorded as the only ones he spoke to her during her visit.

Constance went up stairs after dinner to write home; and when she returned to the drawing-room, she found it tenanted by uncle Thornton alone.

"Why, uncle, are you deserted?" said she, coming up to him.

"Mr. and Mrs. Frederick gone out to tea," he said, putting the poker into the fire.

"And Mrs. Parker?"

"Cobbler's night," said uncle Thornton, laconically, turning to look at her over his shoulder as he made a glorious blaze.

Constance smiled and sat down.

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick came home about eleven o'clock. The lady's first inquiry was about Rosa, the greyhound: "where on earth was it?"

Uncle Thornton did not know.

“In the kitchen, perhaps.”

“Oh, Heaven ! I hope not ; the cook would poison her !”

She rang the bell.

“Nicole, go and find my poor pet, this instant.”

“She is here, Madame ; she follows at my heel.”

“Gracious ! Frederick, how ill she looks. *Sei ammalata, tesoro mio*,” said Mrs. Frederick, clasping her in her arms. “*Sais-tu, Nicole, si elle a mangé quelque chose dans la cuisine ?*”

“I will go seek,” said the valet, and he disappeared.

Mr. Thornton gasped for breath. He could not endure the sound of foreign languages.

“Cook gave her one *morceau* of bread,” said Nicole, returning.

“Bread ! Oh, Frederick !” exclaimed Mrs. Frederick.

“Upon his honour it was very extra-

ordinary the cook could not let the animal alone." Nicole was to tell the cook, "that upon his honour he would not suffer it."

"Bread—only little bit, sweet bread!" said the valet, humbly.

"Sweet-bread! Oh you may go, Nicole," said Mrs. Frederick, rising from her knees; "that won't hurt the darling, I hope."

"I wonder, ma'am, whether you would make half the fuss about a child if you had one!" said Mr. Thornton, now thoroughly wearied.

"When I have one, I'll tell you; very likely not," she returned.

"The pretty delicate-looking creature!"

Constance opened her eyes, and laid all the blame upon poor Rome.

CHAPTER XIII.

AST. 'Tis not in gold to dazzle woman's eye,
'Tis not in pomp to shake her hearted faith
From its firm limit. A true woman, Leon,
Is mistress o'er the world ; for o'er herself
She holds dominion, in the name of love.

ANON.

THE morning before that fixed for her return home, Constance found, on coming down stairs, great symptoms of confusion : sofas were being wheeled about ; chairs removed ; Mrs. Parker, with a troubled face, superintending the making of breakfast. Her curiosity respecting these preparations was soon gratified. Mr. Thornton had an attack of the gout. He was always unusually self-willed at such times, and he

would come down to breakfast, contrary to his usual habit. His servant helped him into the room, and on the sofa ; and then Mrs. Parker began to be very active in his service, teasing him with an infinite variety of questions, to which he returned very short and unsatisfactory answers.

"I fear you passed a sad night, brother," she began.

"Fear so, too," he returned.

"Take an egg, dear brother."

"Mistress Parker," said he, looking her full in the face, "I am going to starve myself. This is the last fit I ever mean to be troubled with."

"Dear brother, don't be presumptuous," said Mrs. Parker, affecting to tremble.

"Miss Constance," said uncle Thornton, turning to her, "is there a bible in the room?"

"Yes, I dare say there is, uncle."

"No, brother," interposed Mrs. Parker, "not in this room."

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, sister

Parker," said Mr. Thornton, with every appearance of gravity, "to let a single room in your house be without a bible? I am afraid you are not half so godly a woman as you would like to be thought. I have a mind to tell the cobbler of you."

"Oh, brother, what a man you are!" returned Mrs. Parker.

"Pray, Miss Constance," resumed the tiresome old gentleman, "can you help me to a text that may suggest a cure for the gout, since Mistress Parker objects to the starving system."

"There are a great many texts, uncle," said Constance, seriously, "which recommend *patience*; and I believe that is more important to the physical condition of people in suffering, than they are often willing to allow."

"Excellent!" said Mr. Thornton. "I should not wonder now if you sometimes helped your papa to write his sermons."

"Very often, Sir," replied Constance, quietly.

A reply so different to what he expected, put the old gentleman into something like good humour.

“Do you hear that, sister Parker?” he cried; “if your cobbler could read running band, you might volunteer your assistance in the same manner. By the bye, why don’t you ask the man to-dinner. To-day is Sunday; between services, now, nothing could be more *à propos*. Pray let me have the pleasure of seeing him at your hospitable board.”

Mrs. Parker looked all delight.

“Dear brother, you are goodness itself,” she cried; “I will certainly do so; but I thought that you—”

“Old, worn-out prejudices,” said the old gentleman, with his peculiar smile, which was always accompanied by a quaint elongation of the upper lip. “I hope to meet him to-day, remember. I can’t go to church, and may pick up something that— And now, as you have finished your breakfast, leave Constance and me to chat

ters, but she did not
any one in the shape of
be invited to feed the
Mr. Thornton: so she
Mrs. Parker, and beggin
terfering, told her frank
her uncle's intentions w

Mrs. Parker kissed a
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she feared he was beg
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When Constance re
ton seemed to have fall

looking up. "People may well call truth a jewel ; for I am sure that it is by no means as plentiful as blackberries."

Mr. Thornton seemed much amused by her reply ; and after laughing quietly a little while, he asked her "If they seemed to object to his proceedings."

"Oh, no !" Constance said ; "not at all."

Then he asked her, if she had any idea why they submitted so quietly to his ways ; at which she laughed, but made no reply.

"Well, child," said her uncle, suddenly, "if you will come and live with me, I will leave you at my death everything of which I may die possessed."

Constance opened her eyes very wide, but the magnitude of the offer took away her breath, and prevented her making an immediate reply.

"I know that your engagement may seem an impediment," said her uncle ; "but when you come to reflect coolly, you will see the folly of marrying a man who is on the brink of ruin."

together till church-time ; there's a good soul."

Now Constance had not the slightest partiality in the world for dissenting ministers ; but she did not like the idea that any one in the shape of a clergyman should be invited to feed the satiric humour of Mr. Thornton : so she slipped out after Mrs. Parker, and begging her pardon for interfering, told her frankly what she thought her uncle's intentions were.

Mrs. Parker kissed and thanked her, and went up stairs rejoicing ; for she resolved that her brother should learn that Constance had marred his plot ; and she thought it would nicely counteract the partiality which she feared he was beginning to entertain towards her.

When Constance returned, Mr. Thornton seemed to have fallen into a fit of musing, from which he roused himself to ask her what she was thinking of.

"I was thinking, uncle, how you order all the people about in this house," said she,

looking up. "People may well call truth a jewel ; for I am sure that it is by no means as plentiful as blackberries."

Mr. Thornton seemed much amused by her reply ; and after laughing quietly a little while, he asked her "If they seemed to object to his proceedings."

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"I know that your engagement may seem an impediment," said her uncle ; "but when you come to reflect coolly, you will see the folly of marrying a man who is on the brink of ruin."

“I am sure, uncle,” cried Constance, indignantly, “that he does not know it. I am sure he is quite open with me.”

“Not know it ! Why ? ” said Mr. Thornton, “because he is too indolent to inspect his affairs. However, it may not be : I hope not ; but the suspicion of such a thing is quite enough to justify your friend interfering and delaying your marriage, although I have another plan in my head for you, supposing you accept my offer.”

Constance could hardly avoid laughing, although she was very much annoyed.

“I am sure,” she replied, “that no real friend would ever advise me to behave so unworthily. Mr. Forde, uncle, selected me when very many richer and prettier women did not scruple to give him abundant encouragement—and he loved me for myself. I could not bring him wealth ; but I gave him back affection, as disinterested as that he offered me. I do not believe his affairs are in the state you describe ; but

were they in the most disastrous condition your fancy can imagine, it should remain with him alone to claim or to reject my hand."

"Well, but just listen to my scheme," said Mr. Thornton, "you must know that my estate joins the property of one Sir Guy Bohun, an old fool, who has a nephew"—

"Captain Bohun, I suppose?" said Constance.

"The same. Well, this old fool, who must needs marry, with one foot in the grave, not being blest with any family, his title and property must of necessity come to the nephew, who in due time will become Sir Something Bohun; what is the man's name, Constance?"

"I am sure I don't know, uncle," said Constance, laughing.

"Well, but don't you see this marriage would make you My Lady, besides uniting the two estates, which I have often wished to do; but for the soul of me could never

find an expedient, until I lighted upon this."

"Dear uncle, how very fast your fancy travels," said Constance, laughing; "suppose Captain Bohun and I should take an immense aversion to one another."

"I don't see that," said her uncle, "he is a very well-looking young man. I don't like your Mr. Forde, I can tell you; he has an easy, gay manner which takes very much with the women; but there's nothing in him, depend upon it. I tell you, Constance, if you don't jilt him, he will you, before the wedding, now. There's no steadiness in him; and I would not wait for him, if I were in your place."

Constance laughed more heartily than before.

"On my word, uncle," she said, "if I did not ascribe all this bitterness to your gout, I should be extremely angry with you; but as it is, I make allowances."

"You are a saucy girl," said her uncle; "but turn over my proposal in your mind,

and give me an answer before you go to-morrow."

"I had rather give it you now, if you please, uncle."

"I won't have it now. There, go along to church; don't you hear the bells?"

"Pray, uncle, does any body in this house go to church, or am I to attend meeting, this morning?"

"Church!" shouted Mr. Thornton; "that French doll goes to church;—she will take you. Never let me hear that you set foot in a conventicle."

Constance accordingly dressed and went into the drawing-room, where Mr. Frederick was sitting by the fire smoking a curious looking Turkish pipe, Mrs. Parker remonstrating with him on so doing, and his wife filling the bowl with Turkish tobacco which looked exactly like rose-leaves, and fortunately for the drawing-room and its inhabitants, possessed very little of the odious smell that renders our tobacco such an extensive nuisance. It was curious in

how very few words Mrs. Frederick made Constance understand that she would permit her to accompany her to church ; however the matter was made intelligible, and she went.

When they returned, it was just time to go to dinner. Mr. Thornton was better and they all assembled in the dining-room. Just before grace, the old man glanced hastily round the table, and said quaintly to his sister :

“ Mistress Parker, where is the reverend gentleman ? ”

“ Ah ! brother,” said she smiling and shaking her head, “ I took the advice of this dear girl here ;— ”

“ Advice—what advice ? ” exclaimed Mr. Thornton.

It was evident there was a storm coming so Mrs. Frederick sat down with her grey hound on her lap, and told it in Italian that she hoped it would not be kept very long, (little treasure), without its dinner.

“ Ah ! we know, don't we Constance ? ” said Mrs. Parker, looking very sly.

Constance had nothing to fear from Mr. Thornton, as she was perfectly determined not to accept the terms on which alone she could obtain his wealth, and although Mrs. Parker had placed her in an embarrassing situation, she possessed a good deal of natural composure, and she was less annoyed by it than most girls would have been.

"I will tell you what advice, uncle, if Mrs. Parker objects to do so," said she, seeing Mr. Thornton grow more and more angry.

"I thought, dear, you might not quite like it ;" said Mrs. Parker.

Constance thought that in that case, Mrs. Parker might as well have not begun the subject ; but without further preface, she distinctly repeated what she had said to her aunt, and on what grounds. She had passed her life with very good-tempered people, and she was not at all prepared for all the angry and bitter things with which Mr. Thornton retorted ; for all the reflections upon meddling, and sanctity,

and impertinence, with which her well-meaning step was visited. It did not improve matters, when she saw Mr. and Mrs. Frederick exchange glances of unfeigned triumph and delight.

“Come, Sir,” said Mr. Frederick, at last, “that will do—we want to go to dinner.”

This of course produced a repetition of the heads of discourse, after which they did go to dinner, with whatever appetites they might severally possess.

Now Mr. Thornton had been so accustomed to say whatever he pleased, without restraint, to all his relations, quite confident that they would be very anxious to be forgiven afterwards on the strength of his money, that he was very much surprised to find Constance apparently unconscious of his presence at table; and his anger being spent with his words, he felt embarrassed at not being on good terms with his favourite. Mrs. Parker did not venture to speak to her, until the interdict of his displeasure was removed by his

addressing her. Mr. and Mrs. Frederick never noticed her at all, and she sat very quietly, but without any awkwardness, which might perhaps be accounted for by the circumstance that she was going home the next day. And she was one of those persons who would not show, nor indeed feel any resentment on such an occasion, but would calmly resolve not to put herself in the way of such annoyances another time.

"You don't eat any fish, Constance," said Mr. Thornton turning suddenly to her.

"Not any, thank you."

"Let me send you some, my dear," said Mrs. Parker, directly, "I declare I quite forgot—"

"None, thank you," repeated Constance, unable to restrain a smile.

Mr. Thornton gave one of his quick, acute glances round the table, and then asked Constance to take wine with him. She went through the ceremony.

A few minutes afterwards he sent his plate round to her, desiring to be helped to the dish that stood before her. She complied. As soon as it was brought to him, he exclaimed :

“ Why, it is curry ! Why did you send it to me, child ? ”

“ Because you asked for it, Sir,” replied Constance.

“ I did not know what it was,” said he. “ Take it away,—villanous compound ! ”

Constance did not seem to hear this last remark, and Mrs. Parker began to talk to her.

“ Did I not hear, love, that you had learned Hebrew ? ” she asked.

“ Yes,” replied Constance, “ it was the first language papa taught me.”

“ Hebrew ? ” cried Mr. Thornton.

Constance seemed to consider this as an interjection, for she did not confirm his doubts.

“ Did you not find it very difficult ? ” asked Mrs. Parker.

"Oh yes, at first," replied Constance ;
"it is as hard to read the letters and points
together as the treble and bass in music."

"Think of that, Mrs. Frederick," said
Mrs. Parker, "Constance can read He-
brew."

"I am really not at all envious of her ac-
quirements," replied Mrs. Frederick, shut-
ting her eyes, "particularly now that I am
so engrossed with that dear German."

"Don't you read Hebrew from right to
left?" asked Mrs. Parker.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And pray," said Mr. Thornton testily,
for he was determined not to be upon
neutral terms with Constance, and not to
quarrel until she made it up with him,
"pray, what good has it done you?"

"Reading from right to left, Sir?"

"No," said he, suppressing a smile,
"learning Hebrew."

"It has given me pleasure, and strength-
ened my power of attention," replied Con-
stance quietly.

“ Oh ! I forgot, you are a logician.”
No answer from Constance. “ Perhaps you don't agree with me in thinking that one language is enough for a woman to make mischief with.”

“ As she can only talk one language at once, I don't think she is likely to be more mischievous with half a dozen than with one,” returned Constance. “ But I think the less mischief she commits at all, the better.”

“ Very well ; bear that in mind then,” said Mr. Thornton.

“ I am more likely to forget other people's ideas than my own, Sir,” replied Constance coolly.

After this there was a long silence. He seemed to find that quarrelling made no impression on her, so he endeavoured to bring about a general conversation of a more amicable nature. This was difficult, as neither Mr. nor Mrs. Frederick would speak to Constance, and she showed no disposition whatever to speak to him. She

sat pulling to pieces the bunch of grapes on her plate, thinking, if truth must be told, about Mr. Forde, and his probable return to Elmsforde.

"What beautiful hair that girl has," said Mr. Thornton to his sister.

"Constance, dear, do you hear that?" said Mrs. Parker, rising directly from table.

Constance looked up, and thinking merely that her aunt was making the signal for her departure, prepared to follow her from the room.

"Uncle Thornton said you had beautiful hair, dear," repeated Mrs. Parker.

"Oh ! he is very kind," said Constance.

"What an idiot the girl is," said Mr. Frederick in a whisper to his wife, as he held open the door for the ladies. "Any one else with her cards to play, would have secured at least a handsome legacy."

When the gentlemen joined the ladies it was little more than three o'clock, and how the afternoon was to pass became a matter

of some conjecture to Constance. Mrs. Frederick, to be sure, had her greyhound, and Mr. Frederick his Turkish pipe ; but Constance finding that nobody meant to go to church, put on her things, and went to walk in the garden.

There was a broad gravel walk running along the back of the house close under the windows, and there she paced up and down, rejoicing in her own heart that she was not doomed to live with a person of so capricious and violent a temper, and wondering very much that Mrs. Parker should think any possible amount of money a recompense for her present endurances.

“ If papa and mamma were in want,” she thought, “ I could bear it. I would bear anything to supply them with the means of existence : but there is something in abuse, which no woman can undergo without feeling degraded by it. In the first place it is a species of injury that she cannot return. And many a person who would shrink religiously from rendering

evil for evil, feels, without analysing the sentiment, that a wrong which can be redressed, is already forgiven. To pardon a prostrate enemy is, indeed, a glorious revenge ; but to forgive, in the silent heart, an insult against which we have no defence, which may be repeated again before the sting of the first unkindness is worn out, this is indeed a virtue which man cannot in himself attain. And so," said Constance, stopping short in her walk, " I don't forgive Mr. Thornton for his violence. Papa though would say that I ought." She passed her hand over her eyes for a moment. " And I will ; I will call him *uncle* Thornton the next time he speaks to me."

At this moment a window close to where she stood was thrown open, and Mr. Thornton's voice called from it, requesting to know what she was doing there.

" Walking, uncle !" she replied, turning round.

" I should rather say standing still," he

returned. "Are you not afraid of taking cold?"

"Not at all; it is a thing I never do. But, pray, is an open window a specific for gout?"

"No, mistress," said Mr. Thornton looking very much pleased; "although you care vastly whether I have the gout or not."

"I do really, uncle," said Constance mischievously; "for you know I don't go home till to-morrow afternoon."

This reply seemed to delight him still more; and after indulging in a hearty laugh, he said;

"Come, I want to shake hands with you."

"Well, I should be exceedingly happy to oblige you," said Constance, "if I could reach you without stepping on Mrs. Parker's flower-beds."

"Oh! never mind the flower-beds," said Mr. Thornton, stretching his hand out o

the window, and shaking hers heartily. “ I respect you, Constance ; and you are the only woman for many years that I have seen cause to respect.”

With that, he suddenly shut down the window, and left Constance to pursue her solitary walk. At length, tea-time arrived, and, some time later in the evening, Mr. Thornton begged Constance to sing one of Handel's songs.

She hesitated, and said : “ If Mrs. Parker had no objection—”

“ What ! have you not found out by this time that I am master in this house ?” said Mr. Thornton.

“ I beg, Sir, that you will undeceive yourself. I am the master in this house,” said Frederick Parker, insolently.

“ You are a puppy, Sir. Go and open the piano !” returned Mr. Thornton, with considerable asperity.

Mr. Frederick thought proper to sit quite still for about five minutes after receiving this command ; but not being able to get

rid of the impression that his uncle's eye was fixed upon him, he went, at the end of that time, to the piano as if by accident and opened it. However, that this indignity might not be altogether unrevenged he talked with his wife, in Italian, very loudly during the song.

Mr. Thornton lost all patience at last and requested him in plain terms to be silent, or to leave the room.

He retorted, that as his uncle could not comprehend a word of what he uttered, he did not imagine it would have engaged his attention.

Mr. Thornton called him an idiot ; and begged Constance, as a great favour, to give him the second movement of her very delightful song over again.

She went over it very cheerfully ; and Mr. Frederick threw himself into an attitude and scowled at Mr. Thornton, in which pleasing condition she left him, when she retired for the night.

As soon as breakfast was over next morn-

ing, Mrs. Frederick's German master came, and about an hour was spent in gasping out the harmonious sounds with which that richest of languages is so abundantly furnished. Then followed a long dialogue between husband and wife on scented soap ; after which, Mr. Frederick put his guitar into tune, and then put it by again ; and then a painter came to take the greyhound's likeness, which afforded very active employment to Mr. and Mrs. Frederick for another hour ; and then luncheon was served, soon after which, Constance had the extreme pleasure of seeing the empty carriage roll up to the front door, which was to convey her home. Mr. Thornton had not yet made his appearance, and Constance was about to leave her adieux to him with Mrs. Parker (in which case, by the bye, they would have been sure never to have reached him), when he suddenly entered the room, with the assistance of a walking-stick, and took her hand to lead her to the carriage. Mrs. Parker followed

them close across the hall, but she was not able to overhear her brother, who whispered to Constance :

“ Now, what do you say to my proposal ? Yes, or no ? ”

“ No, then, uncle,” said Constance, “ no ; but with many thanks.”

“ Well, well,” he said, handing her into the carriage, and putting a small pocket-book into her hands ; “ God bless you ! If you ever want anything, ask me for it. Ah, Mistress Parker,” said he, turning round and confronting her as the carriage drove off, “ you have had a narrow escape—upon my word, a very narrow escape.”

CHAPTER XIV.

Come cheerly, Theckla, be my own brave girl !
See, there's thy loving mother. Thou art in
Thy father's arms.

WALLENSTEIN.

Ah ! ninfa desleal ! y desa suerte
Se guarda el juramento que me diste ?
O condicion de vida dura y fuerte !
O falso amor.

GARCILASO DE LA VEGA.

It was evening when Constance reached her home. Although she had been absent only a week, she watched every turn of the road with impatience, until darkness obliged her to desist from her employment, when she leaned back in the carriage, and amused herself partly with guessing whereabouts she might be at the moment, and partly with reviewing the events

of the last week. "So," she thought, "one word spoken would have put me in possession of a splendid fortune, estates, and carriages, and money, more than I ever dreamed of! Certainly, truth is stranger than fiction! But nothing ever was stranger than my good uncle Thornton; to ask me coolly to give up Mr. Forde. I am much obliged to him. Why, surely, that is Lady Hernshaw's shrubbery, and that the mill-stream. I am just at home."

The carriage stopped, the door opened, lights were brought forward, and Constance flew into the house.

"Dear papa, dear mamma," she cried, embracing them by turns, "am I not good to be so punctual?"

"Very good, my dear," said Mr. D'Oyley, smiling; "and your mamma and I feel particularly flattered, knowing ourselves to be the only inducement to your speedy return."

"Oh, papa!" said Constance taking a chair close to the fire, "how malicious y^{ou}

are. Now, while I am getting quite warm, tell me all the week's news. Is Isabel come back?"

"I had a note from Mr. Forde this morning," said Mr. D'Oyley, "saying that he should be compelled to remain in town another week; but that, of course, he was hastening every body, by all the means in his power."

"Why, mamma," said Constance, laughing, "did you ever know papa so mischievous? I am sure I asked no questions about Mr. Forde. Perhaps you can tell me when Isabel comes back."

"She is not returned; my dear; but I do not, exactly know her movements. Sir George seems to think that they will scarcely be back before the wedding; they have found so many things to do. Lady Hernshaw is resolved to have every thing in a style of great splendour."

"Do you know how Isabel is, mamma?"

"Sir George says that she is very much fagged. Lady Hernshaw takes her out a

great deal. Do you know, Mr. D'Oyley, I always pity that poor girl."

"So do I," returned Mr. D'Oyley; "but if my little Constance were not the steadiest person in the world, I should have been very much averse to her forming an intimacy with her, charming as she is, for nobody can have received an education like hers with impunity."

"I am sure," said Constance, "nobody can help loving her, she has the sweetest manners; and I really think she is not at all vain of her beauty—and such beauty!"

"Well, but as yet you have given us no account of your visit," said Mrs. D'Oyley.

"Presently, mamma. I am first going to make tea," said Constance, placing herself at the table. "I have not had that pleasure for so long. How comfortable we look; ten times more comfortable than Mrs. Parker in her fine house! Papa, have you heard of Edgar since I have been away?"

"Yes, my dear; I received an urge

letter from him, desiring to be present at a certain ceremony."

"Oh, dear fellow! I hope you will allow him; though I fancy it is a certain cake to which he is looking forward the most earnestly. Another cup, papa? You don't pay any particular respect to my tea-making after all. But now for my week's adventures."

To her great satisfaction, Mr. D'Oyley treated Mr. Thornton's prognostics with great indifference. Mr. Forde had explained his affairs to him, and they were in a most prosperous condition; so having given Constance his letter, that she might look through it before she went up stairs, they separated for the night.

The week passed, and not very slowly, even to Constance; there were so many things to be done, and all their acquaintances happened to call about this time to see how she did, and hear what she was to be married in, which rather delayed the preparations.

"A note for me?" said Constance, taking it up from the breakfast-table one moment as she came down. "Mamma, Isabel will come home. How glad Lord Bevis will be to see papa."

"Ah, my dear!" said Mr. D'Oyley, shaking his head.

"What! you do not agree with his opinion of Isabel?"

"Not entirely. He believes that beauty is the infallible sign of a disposition as perfect; he believes implicitly that her education had marred her character, and would likewise have destroyed that exquisite expression which we all admire so much."

"I think he is right," said Constance; "but I may go and see her to-day, mamma."

"Certainly, my dear; but we must call on the Manleys, and that is so long since we paid Mrs. Dyke a visit."

"True; but I am not on ceremony with the Hernshaws, at least not with I

"I can step in there after we have paid our debts elsewhere."

So, by a little contrivance, Constance managed to shorten the other visits sufficiently to give her time to spend at least a few minutes with her friend before their dinner hour.

Isabel had just completed her toilet for dinner, and was sitting in her dressing-room beside a stand of choice flowers, with which she was feigning to be occupied, while Lady Hernshaw standing by her side was holding forth on some topic with great fervour. Constance just caught the word "Opera Box," as she entered.

"Ah!" cried Isabel springing up, and clasping her in her arms, "here is this dear, late, naughty girl come at last. I was sure she would not keep me waiting till to-morrow; and I, being kept prisoner by this horrid cold, could not venture forth in quest of her."

Lady Hernshaw embraced Constance with a great show of favour, and reminding

Isabel that Lord Bevis was down stairs, said she would leave the young ladies to have a few minutes' conversation together.

"You must time me, Isabel ;" said Constance sitting down beside her.

"Oh ! dear, Lord Bevis can wait," said Isabel ; "he had better learn that less early ; patience, Constance, is a virtue ; don't I talk very hoarse ? I caught a dreadful cold at Lady Amersham's ; but mamma's government terminates so soon, that—what do you think of this bracelet ?" She pointed to one that she had just clasped upon her beautiful arm—a gorgeous piece of jewellery.

Constance gave the bracelet a due share of admiration ; but she thought that the costliest decoration could add but little beauty to the symmetrical hand and arm which fell so gracefully on the sofa beside her.

"My Lord's last present !" said Isabel as her fingers played absently with its flexible links. "What will he give me next ?"

I wonder? I should think he had almost exhausted the invention of his jeweller. By the bye, Constance, Mr. Forde can well afford such trifles—what has he given you?”

“I would not receive any presents,” said Constance. “I told him frankly that if he wished to give me any by and bye, he might; but I would take nothing of any value as yet.”

“You are a strange girl, Constance,” said her friend. “I don’t believe you care for him; do you now?”

“Not? Oh, Isabel!”

“Well—not extremely—not extravagantly—own it now.”

“Indeed, Isabel, I cannot own that, even to please you.”

“Come,” said Isabel rising hastily, “I must introduce you to Lord Bevis to-day. It will delight him I am sure. Why, you would not wait till you see him in the church; you would scream, I am certain.

We will not run any risk of the kind ; I have grown very prudent lately."

" I do hope, Isabel—" Constance began.

" Hope ?" exclaimed Isabel ; " there is hope in sorrow, there is hope in doubt, hope in difficulty, in peril ; but there is none arising from deceit, except—"

" Oh ! then Isabel," cried Constance interrupting her, " be wiser than to persist in falsehood. It is not too late."

" No, as you say, not too late," said Isabel with a haughty smile, then changing her manner with her usual facility, she added ; " why, what a colour you have, Constance. I frightened you with my heroics, which after all, were meant only as a general remark. My Lord and I are the best friends that can be imagined, and he has just spent a thousand pounds in fitting up my boudoir ; to which piece of extravagance I could apply a very well-known proverb if I would ; but I thank Heaven I have not received so expensive

an education, as mamma would say, to teach me to talk proverbs !”

“ I cannot understand you, Isabel ;” said Constance.

“ And is not that the reason we are so fond of each other ?” asked Isabel. “ No two people can be more unlike than we are, certainly. Come, Lord Bevis will lose all patience if I loiter here any longer ; I have not seen him yet, since I returned.”

“ Then really I will not go with you,” said Constance. “ I will say good bye here.”

“ Nonsense,” said Isabel ; “ no—do oblige me, now. I would much rather it were so. Come, you won’t refuse.”

“ It would be difficult to refuse you anything,” said Constance smiling, as she met the transparent dark eyes of her friend turned beseechingly to hers ; “ you must do as you please with me.”

Lord Bevis hastened towards them directly the door was opened, and taking the hand of Isabel, began to express his

delight at meeting her again after so long an absence.

Constance was very much surprised having heard so much from her friend against his appearance, to find that his deformity was scarcely apparent; and his countenance appeared so full of intelligence and feeling, as he addressed Isabel, that she could not refrain from wonder at his possessing so little influence over her heart.

"You are so very kind," said Isabel with a smile, in which Constance also traced a touch of irony; "I have to thank you for another proof of your attention—really you are too generous."

She glanced at the bracelet which she wore; and Lord Bevis raised the hat which he still held to his lips, while his eyes spoke the delight he felt at seeing his present accepted.

"And now," said she, "I must introduce you to my dear friend Constance. You are already so well acquainted with

Mr. D'Oyley, that I am sure you will be glad of this opportunity to be made known to his daughter."

Lord Bevis then shook hands with Constance, and expressed himself very happy in the idea that Isabel would enjoy the advantage of her friendship for the future. He believed she would derive much pleasure and benefit from her society, as he had done from that of Mr. D'Oyley.

Constance made a suitable reply, and being well aware that she was *de trop* in the present company, she bade Isabel good bye, and prepared to leave the room. Isabel who had been standing silent for the last few minutes, put her arms round Constance without speaking, and accompanied her to the door of the room, then clasping her in a long embrace, and kissing her fervently, she left her free, and turned hastily away. And Constance very often called to mind afterwards that when she last kissed her friend, her face was wet with tears.

When she returned home, she found a

beautiful bouquet of flowers from Elms which her mamma told her were left a message that Mr. Forde was expected that night.

She spent half the evening in arranging and re-arranging her flowers, and as her mamma (who was sceptical) how natural it was for Mr. Forde not to have written in fact how unnecessary it was, when the day he was hoping to come down, and see her. If he disliked writing only half as much as she did, the matter was easily explained. Indeed, the very nature of Constance so opposed to suspicion, that she might be deceived a hundred times without learning the lesson of mistrust.

The next morning she certainly made more careful toilet than usual. The finish of her hair did not please her until she had altered it three several times, and if she might have devised more improvement if she had not been interrupted by her mother's trusty old servant, Jane, house-keeper, half house-maid, half l

maid, who regularly paid Miss Constance a morning visit, to fasten her dress, and pay her some genuine compliment on her good looks. She used to say, before she knew Mr. Forde, that as the gentlemen did not think it worth while to flatter her, Jane tried to turn her head as much as a score of lovers.

But this morning Jane preserved such a total silence, that Constance was surprised, and more to break the stillness than for any other reason, she asked if there had been a frost in the night.

"Yes ! Miss Constance, a very sharp frost," returned the maid.

"And how is mamma this morning ?"

"Your Ma is middling, Miss Constance, and your Pa desires you will go into his study as soon as you are dressed."

"Oh dear ! I would have made more haste if I had thought he wanted me. Thank you, Jane ; my handkerchief. I am quite ready !"

She flew down stairs, and entered her

father's study ; as she stooped over chair to kiss him, he put his arm round her, and detained her close to him.

“ Well, papa, I made all haste ;” said.

“ I am very sorry, my dear child have to tell you some news of a distressing nature which reached me morning,” her father began in a tone.

“ Papa—Harry,” said Constance turned white.

“ No, my dear ! there is no bad news respecting either of your brothers. I received a visit early this morning from Sir George Hernshaw, who informs me that his daughter eloped last night from his house.”

“ Isabel—and with whom ?” whispered Constance.

“ My poor child ! It is thought that her companion was Mr. Forde.”

Constance dropped her head on her father's shoulder as he spoke, and remained silent. There was a long pause, during

which Mr. D'Oyley stroked back her hair from time to time, a common habit of his when he was much affected. At last, Constance said :

"I think, papa, I am stupified. I hardly understand you. Mr. Forde and Isabel?"

"I grieve to say it is so," replied her father ; " your affliction comes from a quarter whence you least looked for distress ; but I know you will accept this sorrow with submission, you will be patient under it."

"When I know," said Constance, pressing her hands to her forehead ; " when I am certain of it."

"He came down to Elmsforde last night. He is missing this morning," said Mr. D'Oyley.

"And Isabel !" said Constance as if to herself.

"It is indeed a heavy trial," said Mr. D'Oyley.

Constance sat beside him some time leaning her head on his shoulder, silent

and tearless: At last she rose up, as she should like to go to her mamma.

Poor Mrs. D'Oyley, having but a health at all times, was so overcome faint when she heard the news, and D'Oyley only waited to see her restore consciousness before he sent for Constance. Her firmness certainly astonished her father, but he was not so ignorant as to mistake strength for indifference, and he knew her seeming tranquillity was not assumed but arose from the torpor of a shock.

As soon as she stood up, she was surprised to find that she trembled excessively.

"I'll wait a little," she said.

She leaned against the table, and her hands grew as cold as ice. She felt giddy, and her breath came with difficulty.

"Papa—I am ill," she said, "I had better lie down."

Her father caught her as she fell; when she came to herself, she was lying on the sofa in the drawing-room with

hand in his, and Jane, now crying heartily, bathing her forehead with eau-de-cologne.

"She is better now, Margaret," said Mr. D'Oyley turning to his wife who was seated in an arm chair beside the sofa, and looking even more death-like than poor Constance in her swoon.

"Oh ! dear mamma," she said stretching out her arms to her.

"I hope you were not frightened. I was very foolish ; but the room was very hot, and I was overcome for a minute !"

An hour had passed, and she did not know it. She would sit up and make the breakfast. Mr. D'Oyley in vain entreated her to keep herself quiet.

"No," she said, "she would rather be employed ; she was sure her papa would let her have her way to-day at least."

This, uttered with a smile that made his heart ache, procured his acquiescence in all she wished.

It was not until she was surrendered to the solitude of her own chamber that night,

that she sank on her knees and gave to a torrent of the bitterest tears she ever shed ; tears convulsively wrung her which gave her no relief, but so to leave her mind free to more acute perception of the shock it had received. felt shame—burning shame, that she so misplaced her affections—trusted who was without truth ; that she had so blind ; so vain too, as to fancy that could secure regard ; and then to that she had wasted her sensibility loved, as if there were no fear of ch loved as she meant that her whole should answer it ; and having freely the dearest treasures of her heart to that they should be flung back to her worthless, unconsidered trifles.

And Isabel, towards whom she felt affection of a sister, whose warm end at parting she yet recalled—that should be a party in her wrong ! C Bohun's warning flashed upon her : she had been the victim of her p

Isabel *did* make a system of conquest ! Constance wept in anguish—in anger, as she thought of the deceit with which she had been surrounded.

After a time she became calmer, she reflected that it was well this had occurred ; that if she had married a man capable of this inconstancy, she might have experienced his neglect, when it would have been too late to repair the error of her choice ; it was very well too that he had discovered his mistake in time. But, if he had dealt generously with her ; if he had told her his sentiments, or hinted them ; or let her see a shade of coldness in his manner, she would have been content—she would have dismissed him without regret ; but that he had not thought her deserving of his confidence,—well, he who was not noble enough to read her heart, was not worthy to share it. And Isabel ! she who had been so idolised, had returned the worship of her lover with as deep a falsehood !—Then Lady Hemshaw rose before her mind, and the

cruel urgency with which she had pressed her daughter to accept Lord Bevis. Poor Isabel was deeply to be pitied ! Perhaps she might have resolved to escape her marriage by any desperate means, and, in her agony, had won over Mr. Forde to her cause, by her unrivalled fascinations. She might repent, for the sake of Constance, a measure which she had not the courage to abandon for her own. But whether she had been betrayed by a long concerted scheme, or whether it was a sudden transport of passionate excitement on his part, and of terror, love, or misery on her's—she was left in absolute and hopeless darkness ; and at last her weary heart resigned its wrongs

To Memory, and Time's old daughter, Truth.

CHAPTER XV.

He who for love hath undergone
 The worst that can befall,
 Is happier thousand fold than one
 Who never loved at all.
 A grace within his soul hath reigned,
 That nothing else can bring.
 Thank God for all that I have gained
 By that high sorrowing !

MILNE.

THESE exquisite lines, and our language contains, I think, none that breathe a purer tone of feeling, are in themselves the best explanation of real love that philosophy can suggest. Adversity, which is the touchstone of character in every particular, tests with peculiar strictness the delicate and evanescent hues of the rainbow passion—

love. And of all adversity, the sh to a lover is the desertion of the love ject. A great modern writer has said no man remains the same after a pointment : he is either hardened or s ed. The same thing may be obser women ; and one charge against the of single blessedness is the sourne feeling consequent, it is generally sup on a disappointment of the heart.

But these noble lines teach in sweet philosophy a different lesson. heart that has loved may be crushe not embittered : and could we per to the core those who accept in a spirit the frustration of their hop should learn, I believe, that their vani been stung to the quick, or their in hurt ; or their pride (God wot) hun or the stigma of celibacy affixed to if they be women ; or the laugh o world turned against them, if they be These have been disappointed in ma but never in love. For the beauty c

is, that for the time the soul selects for itself another abode—even the person of the adored—and thinks, plans, feels, for that other one as it has been used to do for the frame it was wont to animate ;—and this annihilation of self, though the metaphysician might assure you it was intrinsically selfish, can never be experienced without a temporary conquest over the worst part of our nature ; and one victory gives power of resistance for the future ; and power begets courage, and courage begets success.

There was a great deal of tenderness in the resolution with which Constance disguised from her parents the extent of her suffering. She was always, before them, employed, always equable, if not cheerful in her manner ; and it was only by the marked injury her health sustained, that they were made aware of the struggle she underwent to attain composure. She wondered herself at the physical weakness which resulted from her overtasked

strength ; for there are some persons who are scarcely aware themselves of the influence of their emotions, till they note the changes on the frame ;—which would support the seeming paradox that the mind goes on within our minds of which we are not conscious ;—a theory which if it could be well established, would cause a revolution among the philosophers.

It was a mild bright morning. The bells were ringing for church, and at the gothic porch there stood a group of persons of a different quality from that usually found waiting at the church door before service.

Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Dyce with their respective daughters, and Miss E. composed the party.

“ We are early, I fancy,” said Mrs. Manley, looking up at the bells and speaking loud that she might be heard above the old jangling bells ; “ we had better wait a few minutes.”

“ I think so,” said Mrs. Dyce. “ There is a delightful change in the weather!

“ Yes—but so unseasonable for the first week in December !” replied Mrs. Manley. “ I declare one might sit out of doors to-day without inconvenience.”

“ Oh ! let us be glad of fine weather whenever it comes,” said Mrs. Dyce ; “ we do not find too much of it in our climate. By the bye, my dear Mrs. Manley, what are we to think of this terrible business !”

“ Oh ! I never was so shocked in my life,” said Mrs. Manley, “ I declare ; that poor girl ! I quite felt for her.”

A common expression this ; as if to feel for one’s neighbours was a very remarkable and scarcely credible occurrence !

“ So did I !” returned Mrs. Dyce.

“ But that horrid young man ! “ cried Mrs. Manley. “ I never liked him : I always said to Emma, that there was something in his smile—”

“ So you did, mamma ; but this is something so atrocious.”

“ I assure you, my dear Mrs. Dyce,” said Mrs. Manley, “ I hardly slept a wink

the night after I heard it : you see I had been to Hillsted all day, and my mother had this story for me when I returned. I was astounded—a good deal for nothing but a wretch !—”

“ One really looks upon him in the light of a common swindler,” said Miss Dyce.

“ Oh ! don't talk of him ;” said Miss Dyce ; “ that dreadful girl ! it will come home to her some day, depend on it—so intimate as the Hernshaws and the D'Oyleys always were !—But these runaway matches never answer.”

“ Married in Scotland, were they not ?

“ Yes, and now are gone over to France of course ashamed to show their faces in this neighbourhood.”

“ Ay—and you heard that Lady Hernshaw—”

“ No—what ?—do tell me—

“ Why, as soon as they brought her the news, she dropped on her knees, and vowed in the most frightful manner that she would never admit her daughter to her home again, even if she were starving. Then she

fell into fits which lasted nearly the whole of the day."

"Dear, dear, what an awful woman she is!" said Mrs. Dyce with a sigh.

"But, my dear friend," urged Mrs. Manley, "on such an occasion she was almost beside herself."

"True—but still a mother—"

"I wonder if she will be at church to-day," said Miss Manley.

"Oh dear! I should think not," said Miss Dyce.

"After all," exclaimed Miss Browning abruptly, "there must have been some very bad management somewhere. Constance must be a very clumsy girl. I rather think I could manage to keep a man, when I had won him."

"People say, my dear, replied Mrs Dyce, "that to keep a man is the more difficult task of the two. I don't know, my dear Mrs. Manley, (it is very wicked I am afraid to talk of such things on Sundays,) but I don't know if you recollect that old comedy

The Way to keep Him, Charles Ken used to be so clever in Lovemore."

The thought would intrude itself in Miss Dyce's head, whether it was a great crime to name Mr. Charles Kemble at the church door, or to select that as a catalogue *raisonné* of her neighbour's offences. But Mrs. Manley replied that she remembered him perfectly, moreover that when he was young, he was very handsome; and then she remarked that it was time to go in, and accordingly the party, after another look along the passage way, entered the church.

One great reason for their delay was their anxiety to see Constance: they wished to know how she would look, and whether she would speak to them or not. There is always a mighty curiosity in a village to see anybody after a family loss, or any other misfortune.—It is amazing to see the ladies will take to get a good view of a person under distress; how they will stare and twist to pry beneath the black veil

the mourner, and discuss among themselves the inroads which sorrow may have made upon the face.

When these good ladies took their seats they beheld, with some astonishment, that Constance was in her usual place in her father's pew. She must have come in very early, and it is not impossible that she did so to escape the very meeting they had planned for her. They listened very attentively, but they heard no sobbing from that part of the church ; a baby who was going to be christened, squalled once or twice ; but curiosity could not convert that sound into any human approach to the expression of grief. She turned over her leaves, and stood up when other people did ; once to be sure she untied her bonnet strings, but then the rectory pew was close to the stove. It was quite evident that she did not mean to treat the people to a fainting scene ! So they set themselves to investigate Mr. D'Oyley's sermon, and find out whether he introduced any allusion to late affairs in

the course of it ; but though he was very great, as they called it, about Jerusalem, they could not detect anything which might bear upon forsaken ladies or inconstant swains.

Constance meanwhile, having very patiently waited till every body was out of the church, and her papa come from the vestry, took his arm and walked homewards.

“ How very cold it is to-day, papa,” said she drawing her shawl closer round her.

“ My dear child, I am afraid you are not well ; every body is wondering at the mildness of the weather.”

“ Not very well, papa,” said Constance pausing to take breath.

“ I shall send for Mr. Martyn to-morrow, my dear.”

“ Oh, pray don't, papa, he will be sure to ask me if I have not something on my mind—or some horrid question of the sort.”

However on this point Mr. D'Oyley did not yield to her wishes, and Mr. Martyn did not put to her the questions she dreaded,

because the affair was too public to have escaped his ears. He advised air, exercise, and occupation ; for he was something of a philosopher, and there were many occasions on which he was more ready than his patients to throw physic to the dogs.

“There is one thing, mamma, that I rejoice at in this affair,” said Constance—(for she could sometimes talk over the matter without emotion, at other times the least allusion to it would send her from the room in tears ;) one thing pleases me—my disappointment, as they call it, is something recognised. They cannot accuse me of expecting a proposal that never came. My case is too clear for misrepresentation—is it not ?”

Mrs. D'Oyley did not quite know what to say to this ; she had rather a more enlarged idea of village ingenuity than her daughter ; and her experience proved correct. Those to whom the match had not been confided, at the first, were jealous of that circumstance, and were glad to say

now, that Mr. Forde had been drawn in to make his proposal, and, poor man ! though it was very naughty to run away at so short a notice, perhaps on the whole, it was not to be so much wondered at. Then some doubts arose whether he had proposed at all ; young ladies sometimes made such strange mistakes. Then Constance's appearance came under discussion : some people wondered that she was not more resigned, and thought it very wrong of her to look so pale ; others said that she was a girl of no feeling, and that they could not have borne up against such a shock, not if the fate of the nation had depended on their self-control.

All these remarks of course, came duly round to her ears ; her friends contented themselves with abusing Mr. Forde violently and wondering how it was possible that she could have fallen in love with a young man of such very bad principles. Now Constance entertained some doubts herself of the degree of love she had felt for Mr.

Forde: a great deal of gratitude, with a very diffident and sensitive person, is a very good counterfeit for the tender passion. She had been astonished that a man so much sought and admired; so rich, so agreeable, should have selected her, and she loved him for it, not for himself. It was so disinterested in him, it touched the master-chord in her own heart. People did not know that her greatest agony was, that Isabel could have betrayed her. She already began to conjecture that the love which directs an existence, springs from a far deeper and more perturbed source than that from which arose her placid acceptance of Mr. Forde's suit.

But with respect to his principles, the second count in her indictment, she had the pleasure of knowing that she had not been so weak as to love a man of bad principles. Whenever a man does anything wrong, people accuse his principles—sometimes his character is in fault, sometimes his nerves! Mr. Forde was wonderfully particular in

his ideas of right and wrong, and Constance knew it. He was fastidious in his notions of propriety and honour. He could talk and feel with great accuracy, but his character wanted strength to oppose successfully a temptation, at the precise moment that it was offered to his mind. But for the temptation he would have passed through life with a reputation for every virtue under the sun, a great deal more extolled than those persons who had now the triumph of abusing him. For a little time, these conjectures sufficed to amuse the village; but one Sunday it was observed that Lady Hernshaw passed Constance with a haughty bow: it was their first meeting since the elopement.

This was decisive. It was evident to the whole conclave that Lady Hernshaw was offended with Constance, and after a long debate it was resolved *nem. con.* that Lady Hernshaw believed Constance to have been accessory to her daughter's flight. There was no other way of interpreting her man-

ner. The case was clear. There had been an understanding between them. Mr. Forde was not the lover of Constance but of Isabel; and Constance had feigned to receive his attentions for the purpose of screening Isabel from her mother's penetration. Dear, dear! this was a shocking view of her conduct; they almost feared it would look hardly respectful to Lady Hernshaw if they took any farther notice of Miss D'Oyley. She was very young, they hoped she would repent, and Mr D'Oyley was so highly respectable; perhaps it would be kinder if they were not to cut her; any marked difference in their manner would now be so prejudicial to her in the eyes of the world. *The World!*

Constance had been always a great favourite among her neighbours; but a breath will shift the weathercock of popularity. She could not imagine the reason why people received her coldly, until these reports of her conduct came duly round to her. She was really quite indignant at

first ; for not having done anything to offend these people, she did not see why they should speak of her so unkindly ; but she reflected that they loved scandal, and did not particularly love her, and therefore it was all quite natural, and very common. She was then possessed with some vague wishes that people would speak the truth about her, and nothing but the truth ; but a little more reflection served to remind her, that it was not quite reasonable to expect them to depart from their usual habits on her account, and that the best thing was to take it quietly, and keep out of their way.

Worse and worse ! she was the last person they wished to see in their houses ; but she had no right in the world to absent herself : it convinced them that she was ashamed to shew herself, but it proved also that she had no idea of etiquette, and that she had thrown off even the semblance of good breeding, by thus neglecting her father's old acquaintances.

CHAPTER XVI.

There is a kind of nature that clears up,
The instant it beholds a trying thing ;
In common evils hesitates and doubts,
In ills of moment shews acute resolve.

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

Poor Constance was very generous, very honest, very warm-hearted, but she was not old enough to be very wise. When she found that Lady Hernshaw's manner towards her was so cold, and that so important a meaning was attached to it by her acquaintances, she formed the resolution of calling upon her Ladyship, and asking her frankly what she had done to offend her, explaining at the same time the disagreeable impression which this change of manner

had produced upon her friends. This is perhaps what every candid person who knew nothing of the world, would like to do ; and anything more unlikely to succeed could never be attempted. Lady Hernshaw said what every other woman of the world would infallibly say in the same circumstances ;— she had not been aware of the slightest alteration in her manner towards Miss D'Oyley: she was perfectly at a loss to know to what Miss D'Oyley alluded. Oh ! yes, she did recall to her memory that last Sunday she had passed her without shaking hands ; but if Miss D'Oyley would call to mind her own manner towards Lady Hernshaw, she could be at no loss to account for any slight change, if change there was, in Lady Hernshaw's mode of address. —Miss D'Oyley had seen fit to preserve such a distance, that Lady Hernshaw really thought she must have imputed some of the blame to her, of the late unfortunate transactions.

Constance was extremely surprised. She

did not know that any difference with a woman of the world must be indelible, because if you attempt to explain it candidly away, you are told that you fancied this or that article of complaint, or that the offence of manner lay wholly and solely with you, not with her. However she did know that an altered manner cannot be sworn to, and therefore she took it for granted that Lady Hernshaw threw the blame upon her, because she did not wish to be on friendly terms with her again. With this conviction, she resolved never, if she could help it, to intrude her society upon her Ladyship ; but she supposed afterwards that she had been mistaken in this conjecture, since Lady Hernshaw said to everybody that she could not imagine what whim Constance had taken into her head that she never came near her, and that she had thought her a girl of too much sense to take offence at such slight causes as two or three which her Ladyship took

care to name, as unlike the truth as possible.

Constance felt much more than she chose to show, at all that was said of her. She was kept in a constant state of irritation and disgust at the falsehoods which obtained credit among those whom she had considered in the light of friends. The Brownings were ill-natured, and the Manleys were silly; but she was not prepared to find the Dyces so illiberal. She was heartily vexed, and sometimes very indignant when some fresh piece of scandal worked its way round to her. We know that the uses of adversity are sweet, but the paltry chafing of these daily annoyances seldom produces a beneficial effect upon the temper. Constance felt that she was growing bitter and disdainful—she struggled to repress these feelings, and she succeeded in concealing them effectually from her father and mother; but her health paid the common penalty of mental effort. She

looked and felt wretchedly ill. One day, as she was sitting idly twisting strips of paper into *alumettes*, her father came in with a letter which he asked her to read.

“ My friend Lord Bevis,” said he, “ writes so illegible a hand, that my eyesight is quite unequal to decipher his hieroglyphics.”

Lord Bevis had, immediately after Isabel's flight, set off for his estate in Wales, not even waiting for Mr. D'Oyley to take leave of him. He returned more strictly than ever to all his old habits ; and Mr. D'Oyley's hopes that he would one day take his place in society, were now totally at an end.

What he felt, and how he endured her desertion, were revealed to no one ; he had lived too much alone for confidence on a subject upon which few men like to be candid.

Constance read her father the letter, which contained no allusion to his feelings, except one slight sentence towards the end, where he had been dilating with much animation on some political topic.

“Recollect,” he said, “that my proxy is in very good hands, so let me beg of you not again to urge my entering the polluted arena of public life. If I have encountered such bitter treachery in retirement, do not expect that I could retain my reason, when exposed to the unvarnished baseness of the busy world.”

As she glanced again over the page, she felt that her father's sight must be considerably worse, if he could not make out a hand which to her appeared unusually plain.

A shock passed through her; but she mustered courage to say, as she returned the letter, “Papa, I do not call this a very bad hand.”

“No, my dear,” said her father gently taking it back, “I believe the fault is with myself.”

“Papa, have you taken advice?” cried Constance clasping her hands.

“Yes,” he said, “Mr. Martyn had told him that he must, for a time, be deprived of

sight. He felt very thankful, and he knew she would too, that a prospect of recovery was held out to him."

Constance could not speak ; but what a tide of thought rushed through her mind ! How much was in her power to assist—to console. Her mother's delicate health—her father's coming affliction ! Why, they could not do without her—it was very well she did not marry. How much of cheerfulness her exertions would add to their home—how much of real duty in their moderate household would devolve on her ! It was delightful to feel that she could actually be useful ; she felt strong and well already. She had no leisure to be sick, in such a stirring time.

After a little time, she rose, and kissing her father on the forehead, left the room ; —she was obliged to steal away and be alone, in the restless tumult of her thoughts.

I have said she was not admired by gentlemen. She did not go and sit over a

harp with a torrent of tears running down her face, playing little snatches of tune between every shower ; (of all exasperating habits by the bye, that fragment-playing is the most intolerable !) she did not intend to be resigned and pensive, but resigned and active ; to make those she loved happier she thought rather better than giving way to despondency. She was just the sort of girl of whom the men always say, “ She so dreadfully wants sensibility, she has no more feeling than a stone ; that girl has no heart, and other flattering tributes.

Mr. D'Oyley very soon determined to take a curate, and this plan caused some reduction in their income. Among other arrangements in their household, Tim was to be parted with. Constance was sorry for this ; but her father had found him a comfortable place at farmer Ridge's, and though he had been her *protégé*, she knew he would be quite as well treated, as he had been with them. So she sent for him into the dining room one morning just after

breakfast, and when he made his appearance with his odd little fur cap in his hand, she broke the news to him.

"I'd rayther not go, please, Miss," said Tim coolly.

"Mr. Ridge will be very good to you, Tim," said Constance; "and I told you that we are not so rich as we were; and, therefore, mean to keep fewer servants."

"I ain't hardly a regular servant, Miss," said Tim, trying to look as small as he could; "and I've a many reasons for wishing to stay."

"I am very sorry to part with you, Tim," said Constance; "but may I hear one or two of your reasons?"

"I promised Master Edgar to rear him a starling this spring, Miss; and there's always a nest in your walnut-tree."

"But, perhaps," said Constance, "you may be able to rear him one in your new place."

“ Then, I can't a-bear strangers, Miss,” said Tim.

“ But,” urged Constance, “ they won't seem strangers to you long.”

“ And I like you to hear me read in the Testament, Miss.”

“ But you can read easily now by yourself, Tim ; and you can read the Testament after you have done your work, as well as Mr. Ridge's as here.”

Tim, having all his objections answered, put the cuff of his coat in his eye, and cried.

“ I promise you,” said Constance, “ that if we should grow rich some day, and you wish to return to us, you shall.”

He was consoled in a moment. Of course Miss Constance would be rich one day like all the other young ladies in fairy tales ; and he fancied himself, like the little coachman in Cinderella, driving through the streets in a gilt pumpkin coach. Long afterwards, when he was pushed a

jostled about in the large farming establishment, he used to say: "When my young lady grows rich, I tell you I shall not be cleaning out the stable, or leading the horses to water in this way—that's all."

CHAPTER XVII.

FRAN. Can you procure me a hundred pounds?

LANCE. Hark what he says to you. O try your wit ~~with~~
they say you are excellent at it.

WIT WITHOUT MONEY ~~is~~.

ALL these arrangements were hardly ~~made~~
made before her brother Harry returned ~~from~~
from college. Constance watched eagerly ~~for~~
for the carriage that was to bring him
home. She could hardly restrain her tears
when it stopped at the door, and she hur-
ried out through the snow to meet her
brother.

She was not content with his friendly
shake of the hand, and his "Ah, Con-
stance! how do you do?" after a whole
year's absence. She would have run into

his arms ; but he had been into the world. He had come home a man ; and therefore it was natural, she supposed, that he should hardly recollect he was a brother.

He asked how his father was, however, and seemed very much concerned when told of his failing sight. Then, seeing his mother coming through the green-house, he hastened to meet her, leaving Constance standing in the midst of the drawing-room, thoroughly puzzled by his manner. All that she felt distinctly was, that he was not the same brother who had parted from her a year ago.

“ Those plants of yours look in very good order,” said Harry, returning.

“ Yes ; I think, for the time of year,” she replied, hesitating ; feeling the same difficulty in finding something to say, that she sometimes experienced with strangers.

He relieved her in some measure from this embarrassment by asking her if she had taken lessons in singing, and then finding fault with her dress.

Now, her great object was to save her father expense ; and those who have tried know that dress does not, as some people conveniently suppose, cost nothing. She was not dressed so handsomely as her taste would have suggested, if she had had no motive for her forbearance. She thought of sundry hints that had reached her ears respecting Harry's expenditure at college and was not very much pleased with his ridicule.

“ Where is Eustace ? ” asked Harry.

“ Gone to visit some friend in Yorkshire.”

“ Are the Hiltons still in London ? ”

“ No ; they are returned to Hillsted, and spend their Christmas.”

“ What an antediluvian concern Christmas is ! ” said Harry.

“ Yes ; somewhere about eighteen hundred years old,” returned Constance.

“ I wish my father was come home,” said Harry.

“ Do you ? ” asked Constance, who turned

gan to wonder whether her brother really cared now about any of them.

“ Does Eustace like the army ? ” he asked.

“ Oh yes ; it is just the thing for him ; a lounging, loitering life, dressing and smoking, and now and then pretending to be very busy ! ”

“ I wish—but it is of no use wishing— ” said Harry.

There was a long silence, during which Constance wandered into the green-house and began to pull the withered leaves from her geraniums. She thought how striking is the absence of power which we possess over one another. All her most passionate endeavours would never persuade her brother, if he intended to relinquish the Church, from the line of conduct he might choose to adopt. All her love and care could never prevent her father from the annoyance to which his son's fancies might expose him. She sat down with a sense of utter helplessness, in mind and body.

“ Why, Constance, what are you thinking about ?” said Harry, who had been standing opposite to her for some moments. “ I am glad you are here alone, because I have a good deal to say to you.”

Constance looked up, breathless.

“ You know, some time ago, I dropped some hints about not liking to go into the Church ; well, last week, I received—”

“ Had you not better sit down ?” said Constance, making room for him on the seat beside her. “ Yes, go on.”

“ A letter,” said Harry, “ from my father, telling me that he would be the last person to advise my entering the Church, unless I wished it myself, and that sort of thing, and desiring me to fix upon some other profession.”

“ Well,” said Constance.

“ You know,” said Harry, “ when I could not go out to India, which I wished to do because I had read about the banyan-trees in Milton, I decided on the Church as an alternative by my own free will.”

"I recollect it," said Constance.

"But hearing from you that my father was obliged to take a curate, and so on, I thought to myself that fancies were famous things when they did not interfere with other people's comforts, but that this was not exactly the time to vex my father, and that by taking orders I might assist him in his parish and save him a curate, and so on; and then, you know, as for disliking the Church, it only amounts to this: that one is unwilling to conduct oneself with the decorum necessary for such a position, which must be got over when there is real need."

"Oh, Harry, you are just the same as you were, not at all changed," said Constance, putting her hand in his.

"I *did* think," said Harry pathetically, "when I first said I would be a parson, that I could hunt and shoot, certainly, but that won't do in these days! Still, I should be worse than a brute to let that stand in the way of helping my father."

Harry was not very eloquent, but Constance never had listened to him with so much satisfaction. She felt perfectly happy.

“ But there’s one thing that rather annoys me,” said Harry, “ and I want your advice about it. I have been a little foolish, improvident, you know ; in short, I am somewhat in arrears in money matters. No, you need not look so pale, Constance ; I am not quite in gaol yet ; it is but a hundred and fifty after all ; a trifle to some people, though, you know, not to us, worse luck ! Now, shall I tell my father, or not ? ”

“ Oh, no ! don’t plague papa about it,” said Constance. “ Uncle Thornton gave me a note of a hundred pounds when I went to stay with him. I am sure I had quite forgotten it ; but it is yours with all my heart. But what shall we do for the fifty pounds ? ”

“ Oh ! never mind that,” said her brother ; “ I am only too much obliged to you

for your assistance. I will find ways and means for—”

“No,” said Constance; “pay it all at once. There is nothing like getting quite clear of difficulties.”

“If one can,” said her brother.

“Uncle Thornton has often told me to ask him when I wanted anything,” said she. “I don’t know why I should not tell him I particularly want fifty pounds.”

“Nor I,” said Harry, laughing, “if the old gentleman is at all inclined to stump up.”

Constance having had the meaning of “stump up” explained to her, agreed to write to Mr. Thornton, and her brother left her with many thanks for her assistance.

How happy she felt, when that evening her father took occasion to say that he had been very much pleased by a conversation he had held with Harry, may, I hope, be easily imagined by a good many people.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AND. These women have no hearts for danger, Ethwal—

ETH. None, for the angry strife of mailed ranks ;

But there's a daring in their tenderness

That sometimes will outshine our rougher metal. —

ANON

Now I look

Upon a scene of wintry dreariment,

Pale, leafless, herbless, cold : on that black stream

Black from o'erpowering white.

ELTON

“ Do you mean to walk with papa, this morning, Harry ? ” asked Constance as they rose from the breakfast-table.

“ Yes ; we are going as far as Hillsted. —

“ My love to Mary—and you, mamma—how do you mean to spend the morning ? ” —

“ I have a great deal to do upstairs, my love. ”

“ Oh ! I remember my mother’s mysterious occupations in her dressing-room, when I was a boy,” said Harry ; “ what a vast tearing of linen, and writing on the fragments with a black-lead pencil used to take place.”

“ Well, I shall leave mamma and Jane to their cutting out, and go down to nurse Whitmore’s with the port wine you promised her,” said Constance.

Nurse Whitmore was a remarkable gossip ; and when Constance thought her visit was paid, and she had risen to go away, she was obliged to hear a long history of her nurse-child, who was a very troublesome individual at all times, and had lately been guilty of the several misdemeanours of hooping-cough, chicken-pox, and measles, one after the other, as fast as they could come. Then came a history of his father, who was coachman to Mr. Hilton, and who had been a helper in Mr. Willoughby’s stables, when Mr. Willoughby lived where Sir George Hernshaw did now,

and a very good gentleman he was, and gave a deal to the poor. This led to many affecting recollections of Mr. Willoughby's death, of poor Mrs. Willoughby, who was lame, and moreover unwilling to leave the room when he was dying, how the lawyer, who was her half-brother, supported her by the bedside, and how, after lying quiet some time, Mr. Willoughby felt over the quilt, and found his handkerchief, which he drew over his face, and when they lifted it off, he was a dead man.

Constance, who was nervously sensitive on the subject of deaths, cried at this recital, which very much exalted Mrs. Whitmore, who felt as well satisfied as an actor who has made his point and received his round of applause, when her narrative called out her young lady's pocket-handkerchief.

Then Mrs. Whitmore was seized with a lively desire to show Constance the nurse-child, in order that she might identify his

eyes with those of the young woman who lived as dairy-maid at Mr. Browning's and who was the mother of the remarkable young gentleman in question. Some minutes were therefore spent in shouting into the cellar, and the back yard and the garden, and some more in abusing him for not being forthcoming, and then Constance, who had a strong presentiment that it was drawing towards one o'clock, and that she would be scarcely able to reach home in time for dinner, wished the old dame good day, and set off through the meadows home. It was a bleak raw day. The drops hung on the bare hedges, and the boughs were stained with the rain which had fallen in the night. The pretty shrubs that straggled half across the stream in summer, now looked saturated with wet, and added to the dreary aspect of the rapid brook. It was swollen too, and boiled along as it neared the large arches with a hoarse and angry sound. At a short distance from her there was

a sturdy child tugging at the branch of an old hawthorn that stood roughly out over the water. As soon as he saw Constance coming towards him, the little fellow, aware that he was out of bounds, made a desperate pull at the branch. It gave way suddenly, and he fell into the stream with a loud cry and a splash, that sent a shower of drops into her face as she darted forward.

Without a moment's hesitation she plunged in after him, and seizing his frock, attempted to gain the bank ; but she had not calculated on the rapid current which she opposed ; the first step she made she lost her footing and was whirled along with the child still in her grasp, and her other hand vainly catching at the long grass and slender twigs which seemed stretching forward their fragile and ineffectual aid. She was out of her depth ; the stream narrowed ; the banks grew higher ; the dark trunks of the trees, far above her head, stood frowningly between

her and the sky ; the roaring of the mill wheels sounded like thunder above the rush of the hurrying stream. She was borne nearer, every instant nearer to those hideous arches which yawned as black as night over the furious milk-white foam that flashed beneath. Another moment, and she was thrown against a broken post which stood just above the water, the remains of some old lock or weir. She caught it firmly in one arm, with the other she pressed the child more closely to her. He was insensible, she thought ; his eyes were closed and his fair hair hung streaming over his face. She screamed for help, but the wind sported with her voice, throwing the sounds back to her, amid all the turmoil of the waters, like some dim echo. The mill was so near that she felt there were fifty people within call, who yet might never see her till her strength was wasted, and she and the child had floated down that frightful archway. The cold was so intense that she feared, every moment, her

limbs would lose their feeling and resign her to the waves. She looked up and prayed. Presently the child began to struggle ; she implored him to keep still, in tones whose agony was so real that he obeyed at once. She turned her eyes wildly round ; they then fixed on a small window of the mill that looked upon the stream, but so long disused, so thick with dust and cobwebs that no possible chance could bring a face from within to its darkened surface. At length she heard a step ; she could not be deceived ; a workman was returning from the mill by the path on the other side of the stream. She called, in vain, every note of the coarse tune he was whistling came clearly to her ear ; but he passed on—passed her without a glance and plodded homewards. Her heart sank ; she felt all the anguish of despair ; her eyes followed every step the man took, with an effort that gave to every pulse of her heart the duration of a minute.

Suddenly the man stopped ; he laid hold

of a young ash sapling. He had a mind to cut a stick. Constance called again, more faintly, for her strength was failing. The man took out his knife and began to cut. In doing so, he turned round and faced the mill. All at once he stopped and shouted ; then ran along the path till he came opposite to Constance.

“Why, mistress,” he cried out, “how did ye come there? Hold hard; I’ll go round to the mill and get some of the men to help you.”

From that moment her recollection left her; and though she was drawn to shore still clasping the child, and though she walked into the mill and down to the kitchen of good Mrs. Barlow, she was aware of nothing that passed till she found herself pressed in her mother’s arms, and became dimly sensible of the figure of nurse Whitmore kneeling over her recovered child.

CHAPTER XLX.

CLA. She hath said many things concerning me,
never a truth among them,

BEL. Then should I opine the lady lied.

CLA. Nay, Sir, she mistook knowingly.

ANON.

CONSTANCE was very much praised
two or three persons for her courage.]
Hilton took the trouble to procure
a medal from the Humane Society.]
D'Oyley's curate fell in love with her
rectly. Harry wrote some Latin verses
her exploit, and Edgar who had just
turned from school, translated them i
very bad English.

But it is an old remark that there
two sides to a question, and the reve

of this was very curious and interesting. Several people found out that Constance had not saved the little boy, but that the little boy had saved her; she having been anxious to drown herself on account of her disappointment with Mr. Forde. This report spread like wildfire, having as Harry said, some foundation for it. There was no doubt that she had been in the water, and it was therefore most natural to suppose that she went in for so reasonable a purpose.

One of her most active partisans was her cousin, Miss Hilton, who was very warmly attached to Constance; and who deserves some slight tribute of praise for her friendship to a relation so much younger and prettier than herself. Mary Hilton was by this time arrived at that very disagreeable age when a woman who wishes to marry begins to feel very nervous as to her chance, when candle-light is welcome, and dress becomes a study not a pleasure—she was twenty-eight. People

called her plain, particularly common people, with whom roses are indispensable to beauty, but she was small and well made, with a great quantity of dark hair, a soft olive skin and large hazel eyes; her smile was charming, and she had the prettiest possible gentle way of talking. She rode well, walked well, danced well, and dressed to perfection. For the rest, she was thoroughly in earnest, and possessed a tolerable share of quiet contempt for society at large; for she had made the surprising discovery that there is very little honesty abroad, and being singularly upright in word and deed herself, she shrank from a closer intercourse with her circle of acquaintance than the customs of polite society demanded.

"It is very odd," said Constance one day to her cousin, "that I, who have always been such a peaceable person, who never gossipped or told tales of any one, should have all these stories circulated about me. I do wish they would leave me alone."

“ Why, my dear Constance,” said Mary, looking up from the corner of the sofa on which she was idly reclining, “ Edgar, dear, do keep the door shut if you ever wish your sister to get rid of that horrid cold of hers. My dear Constance, I must insist on carrying you back with me to Hillsted. Now I know you have as usual a hundred excuses ready ; but I am tired of this satin stitch, and not very idle this morning, so that I shall answer them as fast as they come. You go to Hillsted with me this evening.”

“ *A-propos* to what, I wonder ?” said Constance, laughing.

“ It would really be so useful to you, my dear Constance, to see a little more of the world. You can hardly form a true knowledge of people from those few you have known all your life. You see them too minutely. You must learn to generalize. How could you wonder that people should attack you, because you have never done them any harm ? A little ex-

perience will show you that your friends feel secure when they attack you ; they have all the pleasure and none of the risk ; they may put about all the stories they like, confident that you will coin no falsehoods of them in return. If you had a bitter tongue they would be kept in check by the fear of retaliation. No, my dear Constance," said Mary, taking up the golden scissors which hung to a chain at her girdle, and carefully smoothing the edge of her cambric, "they have you at a disadvantage."

"It is very provoking," said Constance ; "but I did not tell you that Mrs. Langley is one of my bitterest accusers. She said at a large party that I had inveigled her brother, and then tried to drown myself on account of his desertion."

"Mrs. Langley !" said Mary, pausing to consider, "the lady who is separated from her husband. She used to be staying at Mr. Forde's. By-the-bye, what is supposed to be the cause of her separation ?"

"No fault in the world, I believe. Not even the common plea of temper! The only reason that her husband assigned was that she crumbled her bread at dinner. Her hatred to me is inexplicable."

"Why, my dear," said Mary, "she envies your hair, or your complexion, or your voice, or she has heard you praised, or she feels compelled to respect you—any of these are causes enough."

"Well, when she announced this suicide of mine before the party, - a gentleman present, Mr. Dyce, ventured, from his acquaintance with my family, to express with some decision his unbelief in the report. Mrs. Langley turned round with her soft childish air, and said: 'Dear me, what have I done? I did not know Mr. Dyce was a relation of Miss D'Oyley's!'"

"Excellent!" exclaimed Mary. "I am such a student of character that I feel as pleased with a little bit of comedy as an artist with a characteristic face. A re-

lation of Miss D'Oyley's ! 'The force of satire could no farther go !' If our comedy were as delicate, or our audience as intuitive as the French, what a nice point it would make for a vaudeville. It certainly was a masterly stroke of ill-nature !"

And here Mary indulged in a merry ringing laugh, in which Constance joined very much against her will.

"Ah ! Mary," said she, "there is no amusement in such things when they concern yourself."

"Constance, dear," said Mary, "just look in that glass. Yes, blush, and then turn your mind's eye upon Mrs. Langley's face. Without prejudice, a respectable baboon has much more reason to be vain of its personal advantages. Does not the survey present a very easy solution of the problem ? By the bye, dear, where do you buy your Moravian cotton ? Mine breaks with every stitch."

"I never do that sort of work," said Constance.

"Edgar, stir the fire," said Mary, laughing, "your sister looks so cold."

"Cross, you mean," said Constance, smiling again.

"Puzzled that I cannot feel indignant at the coarse slander of malicious woman: Oh! my dear Constance, when I was your age, how angry I used to be; how my whole soul would rouse up at unworthy or dishonest conduct! But time;

Time and grief,
Fearful consumers, you will all devour.

When one has suffered much, the mind grows tranquil under paltry wrongs."

Constance, who remembered that Mary had some years ago lost her mother and two sisters within a few months of each other, sat grave and silent.

"Set out, dear," said Mary, "with a low opinion of mankind. The first trouble is generally the least."

“Is that charitable?” asked Constance

“Very much so,” returned Mary. “For the generality of people being, take my word for it, good for very little, if you expect from them constancy, or truth, or self-denial, or any thing beyond little current virtues, you will be disappointed and disappointment is always angry. Oh your misanthrope is your only true philanthropist!”

“Well,” said Constance, “I’ll think about it; and in the meantime let us go to luncheon.”

“No, first I shall go to my uncle and aunt, and convince them that it is proper for you to return with me this afternoon.”

“If I really thought I was not wanted—” said Constance.

“Now I do like the conceit of that idea,” returned Mary, laughing. “What possible use can they make of you now Edgar at home to read and write, and walk with your dear father—”

“But Edgar reads with such a tone,” said Constance.

“Which he will never get rid of without practise. Your going away will be a real benefit to the whole family.”

“I’m sure I don’t want her to stop,” said Edgar, pouting ; “I can read to please papa, if *she* does not like it.”

“What a foolish little sulk he is in,” said Constance putting her arm round his neck, and so leading him out of the room ; “and all because he hears a tiny bit of ugly truth.”

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed by Schulze and Co., 18, Poland Street.



CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

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VOL. II.



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CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.”

I do no fors, I speke right as I mene.

CHAUCER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1844.

CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

CHAPTER I.

Exceeding fair she was not, and yet fair
In that she never studied to be fairer
Than nature made her—beauty cost her nothing.

CHAPMAN.

LOP.—Note but his mind to learning.

BAR.—I do strangely—yes, and I like it too, thanks to
his money.

THE SPANISH CURATE.

MARY gained her point, she always did
with everybody, and Constance was made
over to her for a few days, more or less, as
the catalogues call it.

They arrived at Hillsted Park in very

good time to dress for their eight o'clock dinner ; they expected company, but that was no novelty to Mary, there were very few days in the year that Miss Hilton had the luxury of dining alone.

In fact, a carriage which had just set down its freight of guests was slowly rolling from the door, as they drove up ; but Mary informed her cousin that it said nothing for their want of punctuality, for the Framptons always came in time to dress for dinner, and did not go away till the next morning. Accordingly they found the Frampton party installed in the drawing-room, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Frampton with two tall daughters, and a conceited young friend with black eyes, who was very anxious to be introduced to Miss Hilton.

Mary had a note which was waiting for an answer ; and after some apologies, she went into the next room, begging that they would make themselves very warm before they thought of going up stairs to dress.

The first proceeding of the party was to turn their heads decidedly away from Constance, that she might not, by catching a look, be led into the indiscretion of attempting to speak. She was very well pleased with this arrangement, for low spirits and a bad cold are not great incentives to conversation.

“ Sweet creature !” said Mrs. Frampton, as Mary closed the door after her.

“ Quite a dear, I love her already !” cried the conceited friend looking up to the ceiling.

“ Amelia, dear, isn't this a pretty place ?” asked Miss Sophia Frampton who was leaning against the window.

“ I shall see it better to-morrow, love ; I do so like the dear old-fashioned custom of staying all night when one dines out,” said Miss Meredith, with her arm round Miss Sophia's neck.”

“ This place always reminds me of dear Westlands,” said Miss Frampton.

“ Lord Westland's place,” said Mrs.

Frampton in a lofty soliloquy which was meant for Constance.

“ I do hope poor Lady Westland's arm is better,” said Miss Sophia.

“ Poor thing ! what was the matter with it ?” cried Miss Meredith.

“ Her little boy ran a pin into it,” said Miss Frampton : “ he is a fine spirited little fellow ; but it was very painful.”

Constance wondered whether ladies of quality recovered more slowly from such injuries than other people.

“ The roads are in such very bad order about Hillsted,” said Mrs. Frampton. “ I thought our poor carriage would never have got through that lane.”

“ It was all your fault coming that way,” said her cross-looking husband ; “ enough to lame the horses.”

“ Now !” exclaimed Mrs. Frampton extending her hands ; “ when I said all I could to make you take the Ashley road !”

“ Well, I like that !” said Mr. Frampton and in proof of his liking it, he

walked up and down the room, and whistled.

Here Constance rose, and offered to ring for candles if the party would like to go up stairs to dress.

Mrs. Frampton, who was thoroughly out of humour, leaned over to her daughter, without replying to Constance, and asked in an audible whisper, "Who is she?"

"My name is D'Oyley," said Constance with her hand on the bell. "But I think I have influence enough to procure you candles if you wish for them."

"Dear me, Miss D'Oyley," cried Mrs. Frampton, who like most insolent people was very easily abashed. "I had no idea—I really must scold that naughty Mary for not naming you."

Mary came in at the moment, and Constance not waiting for any farther explanation, took up a candle and went into her dressing-room.

"Oh ! my dear Constance, such a party," said Mary as she called at her cousin's door

to take her down stairs; "there are Sir John Crawley, the rich merchant; Mr. Dalton, one of papa's partners; the Framptons, whom I need not describe; and the Maddoxes, who are rather worse than the Framptons. If it were not for my dear friend Colonel Bohun, I should feign a head-ache, and leave you to take the head of the table."

"Thank you," said Constance pulling on her gloves.

"By the bye, Gibson," said Mary addressing her maid, "do put that magnificent coil of my cousin's hair round her head like a cable. You know the style. So you don't know Colonel Bohun! Mind, I won't let you flirt with him; at least, not much; he ought to have lived in Charles the First's time. He wants the slashed doublet and drooping hat of the old cavalier; he is my godfather, and so very fond of me that I cannot help returning the compliment. He is such an old friend of papa's too; schoolfellows they were—so odd that

it should last, that inconsiderate friendship !”

“ Really,” said Constance, “ I think there is as little reason in friendship as in love.”

“ You are so hoarse this evening, my dear,” said Mary, “ that I’ll not argue with you, or else I should venture to differ on that point. Now let Gibson secure all those thick tresses with this gold pin, and then we will make haste down to the company.”

“ Stop, stop !” cried Constance putting up her hands, “ I don’t like appearing in borrowed plumes.”

“ Not borrowed,” said Mary smiling, “ the pin is your’s henceforth, if you don’t disdain it. Hark ! eight o’clock. I shall have a torrent of reproaches from Colonel Bohun, for my want of punctuality.”

So, talking away her cousin’s thanks, she hurried her down into the drawing-room.

Mr. Hilton and Colonel Bohun were

standing talking over the fire. Sir John Crawley and Eustace in one of the windows were exchanging short sentences about dogs and other brutes.

“ I am come at last,” said Mary, as she shook hands with Colonel Bohun, after recognizing her brother and his companion as she passed them. There’s a great deal of mute eloquence in your pointing to the clock, I know, but it is so dark that the reproach is quite lost on me.”

“ You have been spending your time to very good purpose,” said Colonel Bohun, drawing her nearer to the firelight, and surveying her with great satisfaction ; pray what favoured swain is expected to-day, that you have made such a superb toilet ?”

“ Now if you are going to talk nonsense,” said Mary, “ I shall sit down quietly at the other end of the room till you have finished. You need not pretend to forget these silver ornaments you brought me from Malta, the only finery I have on, by the bye.”

“How well she looks,” said Colonel Bohun turning to Mr. Hilton.

“Mr. Hilton glanced at her carefully. He was very little interested in the matter. He could not coin her into money, and she was not likely to improve his connections by a good marriage. To be sure she could sit at the head of his table ; and she did the honours very well ; but in any other point of view she was rather in the way than otherwise.

“I thought she was late,” he said after a pause.

“I was the delinquent,” said Constance ; “my kind cousin stayed to revise and correct my attire, or we should have been down half an hour ago.”

Mr. Hilton was pleased : he liked anything straight forward ; it was a conspicuous feature in his own character.

Mary said something low to Colonel Bohun, at the close of which he begged to be introduced to Constance ; and then as if in reply to Mary's speech, said to her. “It runs

in the family I think ; it is what I always admire in Eustace."

Constance drew up her head, "I wonder," she thought, " what resemblance he can possibly find between me and my stupid cousin !"

Before she had solved the problem, the rest of the party arrived, and dinner was announced.

As soon as the ladies retired to the drawing-room the whole Frampton party flew at Mary's dress ; Miss Frampton kneeling to examine the skirt, Mrs. Frampton reconnoitering in front, and the two other young ladies attacking the sleeves.

" What a velvet !" cried one.

" What a cut !" exclaimed another.

" And look at that conceited little scroll on her head," said Mrs. Frampton ; " come tell us who that was put on for ?"

" Was it Mr. Dalton ?" asked Miss Frampton.

" Or Sir John Crawley ?" cried little Miss Meredith.

"I think after all, I always did, that Mary is in love with Colonel Bohun," said Miss Frampton.

"La ! my dear," cried Miss Meredith.

"If she is netting a purse," continued Miss Frampton, "it is for Colonel Bohun. If she is working a waistcoat, Colonel Bohun asks her to embroider it. That pretty watch guard on the table, I would lay any wager is for Colonel Bohun."

"Confess, confess ! cried all the ladies, "You are in love with him ?"

"Oh ! I am," said Mary ; "but there's a law, is there not, my dear Constance, in the prayerbook, against marrying one's grandfathers and godfathers, and all that sort of people."

"How I should like to see Mary in love !" said Miss Frampton musing.

"If Mr. Eustace Hilton was not your brother," began Mrs. Frampton. "By the bye, my dear, what a superior young man he is."

"Yes ; I don't know when I've met so

delightful a person," said Miss Sophia Frampton.

Mary just ventured a glance of her bright eye to Constance, it was the merest trifle of a look ; but Mrs. Frampton caught it. She said nothing, but she hated Constance from that hour ; for she thought the look meant that some understanding subsisted between Eustace and his cousin, that might interfere with the claims of one of her daughters. Really, the old sword and dagger warfare of our ancestors was preferable to the cold and malignant trifles that make up the enmities of modern good society.

"Here is Mary owning that she is in love with you," said Mrs. Frampton to Colonel Bohun, as the gentleman entered.

Colonel Bohun smiled, pressed Mary's hand, and passed on to Sir John Crawley. It was evident they understood each other. She could not, if she tried, get up a difference between them.

Mary now sat down beside Mrs. Maddox and her daughter, who had held themselves

proudly aloof from the previous discussion. Mrs. Frampton and Mrs. Maddox were sometimes violent friends, at other times a little buzzing sort of warfare went on between them. They had always some subject of irritation in reserve, and at present the dangerous ground was the family at Westlands. Both the ladies were admitted within Lord Westland's doors—they could say very little more ; but Mrs. Frampton found out that Lady Westland had returned her last call three days sooner than that of Mrs. Maddox. She had likewise lent Miss Frampton some new waltzes to copy, and she had never lent Miss Maddox anything. Mrs. Frampton found out that Lady Westland looked very handsome, and Mrs. Maddox never could see any beauty in those very light people ; then Mrs. Frampton suggested that perhaps Mrs. Maddox had never seen Lady Westland in sea green satin ; to which Mrs. Maddox replied sharply, that she never had, and she hoped she

never should ! At this crisis, Mary interposed to beg a song from Miss Maddox and a duet from Miss Frampton and her sister ; and then under cover of the music she went to a work-table strewn with books and beckoned Constance and Colonel Bohun to join her.

“ I have interrupted your political discussion,” said she, “ but that I know you will forgive. Sir John Crawley was growing very warm, poor man, he always seems to think there is so much argument in a noise. What is it that distresses him now ? Are the French going to land at Dover ; or let me see, what is his other nightmare ? Is any thing going to happen to the national debt ? ”

“ No,” said Colonel Bohun, “ he has forgotten the French and the national debt for the present. He was holding forth upon the new poor law. He grew very loud on the atrocity of the separate maintenance system, and wound up by desiring me to read *Oliver Twist*, if I wished to see

an accurate statement of facts on the subject."

"And yet," said Mary, "if you were gravely to recommend a novel on your side of the question to that man, he would treat the idea with the utmost contempt. He would thank Heaven he did not go to fiction for his facts."

"And which side of the question do you take, Miss D'Oyley?" said Colonel Bohun turning to Constance.

"Papa thinks it works well about us, so I like it," said Constance naturally.

"That is as it should be," he said, looking at Mary with a smile.

"Politics are insufferably tiresome to very young people," said Mary; "I am beginning to acquire a taste for them."

"You!" said Colonel Bohun, very much as if he did not think her old enough.

Mary then took up the life of Wallenstein, and asked him some questions about the siege of a town mentioned there, and he

began drawing her a plan that would explain his meaning.

“ You have read this book, Constance,” said Mary, “ talk about it.”

“ If I could talk about any thing with this cold,” said Constance, “ I would ; for I was very much pleased with it. The style is so dry and clear, and it gives such a masterly sketch of the religious parties of the period ; but I am afraid I detect a slight—just a very slight disposition, my dear Mary, to sneer at the ladies.”

Colonel Bohun looked up from his drawing at this attack, and said laughing that the ladies of the present time were not generally deserving of a comparison with those who lived two hundred years ago ; still there were some, and his eyes rested on her and Mary.

“ I hope you don't mean, by looking at us, that you think us two hundred years old,” said Mary ; “ now be so good as to explain your plan to me. Thank you, I

don't pretend to be very wise, but it is too bad not to know a curtain from a bastion."

If looks say anything, Colonel Bohun looked as if he thought that a stretch of ignorance too profound even for a woman to arrive at.

"You are an imperious little creature," he said; "and by the bye, you have not deigned to inquire after Reginald this evening.

"And is there anything wonderful in that?" said Mary. "I really don't know what possible reason I could have for supposing him anything but very well. He does not smoke, and he does not drink, you say; and he is too good a rider to be thrown off his horse on a field day and break his neck; and these are nearly all the casualties to which our modern heroes are exposed."

During this conversation, the Miss Frampsons had been executing a very long duet; and Miss Maddox had been talking with Miss Meredith on a conversation chair; all four ladies glancing from time to time

at Eustace who was reclining on a sofa at the other end of the room, playing with his sister's lap-dog, and evincing a total disregard to the assembled company. This was very provoking, as he was the only young man in the room. Miss Frampton paused as she turned over a page, and asked him if he played the flute.

He looked up languidly, and said "No."

Miss Meredith, emboldened by this concession, moved a little nearer to him, and asked whether he was fond of hunting?

This time he said "Yes," but without looking up, and then yawned.

This was encouraging; but Miss Meredith was a lively young lady, and begged to know, in a playful manner, whether he was fond of balls.

"No," he replied. "Although, if it was not for the row the music made, he thought he could go to sleep on the benches nearly as well as anywhere else."

"What?" cried the young lady, "do you never dance?"

"No," said he. "He knew some fellows that did, but he thought them great fools for their pains."

Miss Meredith suggested that dancing was very delightful, to which he replied by another yawn behind his laced handkerchief.

Then she informed him that the last ball she was at, she had caught a horrid cold, which elicited from him the sympathetic exclamation of, "Dear me, what a bore!"

Did he like music? she wondered.

He made answer that he did not know, and thereupon arranged his moustaches.

Then she wished to know if he liked the army.

This again was too hard a question. He hardly knew. He thought it rather slow at present.

Did he like his Colonel?

Yes; he thought Colonel Bohun was a fine old boy. That was his colonel, he supposed she knew, the old fellow with grey hair, scribbling on a bit of paper.

After giving her this piece of information, and moreover hazarding a conjecture that the said Colonel Bohun might be somewhere about six feet high, he drove the spaniel from the sofa, and seemed very much inclined to go to sleep.

Miss Meredith bit her lip, and went to the piano.

Constance, who had caught part of the preceding dialogue, with great indignation now called out to him.

“Eustace!”

Her cousin deigned to lift up his head.

“Well, you must come hither. You do not suppose I shall give you my orders across the room.”

Eustace rose, and came up to the table where she was sitting.

“You are awake, I hope?”

Her cousin stared.

“Yes, I see; well, Miss Meredith has never seen the new fuschia, or the last crimson heath. Be so good as to bring her a specimen of both from the conservatory.”

"Very happy," said her cousin.

"Thank you. Don't faint by the way."

Eustace went as far as the door, and then came back again.

"After all, Constance," said he, "you must come with me, for I am no botanist."

"Bless me," said Constance rising, "then I might as well go by myself, only I am so unwilling to spare you any trouble."

"A very good move that of your brother's," said Colonel Bohun to Mary as Eustace left the room with his cousin.

"That is the fuschia, and that is the heath," said Constance. "Make haste while I steal some heliotrope for myself."

"You are looking very well, to-night," said Eustace. "I do believe your cold is only a sham."

"You are very obliging. When you jump into a river in cold weather—when you do—just remember me," said Constance.

"Upon my word, it was a very game thing in you to do."

“ So it was,” said Constance. “ And just mark my politeness in agreeing with you, when I don’t know the meaning of what you have said.”

“ Here,” said her cousin, holding out the flowers.

“ You are too good ! Those are for Miss Meredith. I have helped myself to as many as I want.”

“ I would much rather give them to you,” said Eustace, looking at her very admiringly. “ As for Miss Meredith, the girl will think I am in love with her if—”

“ Stop !” cried Constance. “ Now let me give you a lecture. Because you are an officer—that is, because you are allowed sometimes to disfigure yourself by wearing a red coat ; do you know how unbecoming red is ? Do you know that I would not wear a red gown if I were to be paid an annuity for doing it ?”

“ That’s by way of parenthesis, I suppose,” said Eustace. “ But you would wear one fast enough, if it was a distinc-

tion to do so. All women love distinction, if it is ever so paltry."

"Very brilliant! Now take this by way of another parenthesis: all sayings against women are half-truths, and no man of sense will use them; it is the sign of a rogue to have a low estimate of women. Where was I?"

"I'm hanged if I know," said Eustace.

"Oh! because you are an officer, you think every woman you speak to must fall in love with you. Allow me to undeceive you. Women permit young officers to flirt and pay them silly attentions, because they are unable to converse and behave rationally. Of course there are exceptions to this rule; but mind, never among the young ones; don't think *you* can escape."

"I'm sure," said Eustace warmly, "that Reginald Bohun is not at all the sort of fellow you describe. He knows as much as a parson too, if you want learning."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Constance, arranging her flowers; "not that I know who

Reginald Bohun is. Oh ! Captain Bohun, I suppose. I hope I've set your mind at rest, that's all. No woman worth a pin will care for you because you are an officer. It must be dreadful to feel yourself so irresistible. Don't, please. I hope your conscience, Sir, is more at ease."

With these words, she sauntered back into the drawing-room just as the party was rising to disperse. Miss Meredith received her flowers with many demonstrations of pleasure, and Mrs. Frampton pressed one invitation after another upon Mr. Eustace Hilton, until she found a day on which he could declare himself disengaged. Colonel Bohun was taking leave. "Do you return with me?" said he to Eustace, "or find your way over to C—— to-morrow morning?"

Eustace looked at Constance, and decided that he would remain at Hillsted until the next day.

CHAPTER II.

GAS. Why then, how many steps d'ye make, Isora,
 'Twixt love, and that o'er dazzled sense that leads
 From liking upwards to entire regard.

Is. More than uprose in that celestial path
 Traced by a shepherd in his sacred dream
 From earth to heaven—steps for an Angel's foot
 To linger on—I know you'll miss them, Gaspar.

ANON.

CONSTANCE chose to breakfast in her room the next morning. Whether she had caught her cousin's look of the evening before and chose to disappoint him, or whether her cold really was worse, as she declared, is a matter of some doubt; certain it is, that though she had in her nature a little of the flirt, she had none of the coquette; and there lies between these

two names all the difference between a folly and a crime. She liked to enjoy with gentlemen the lively conversation which one woman can seldom obtain from another ; but the idea of receiving or implying admiration never once entered into her head.

She was reading quietly by the fire in her cousin's morning-room, when her studies were interrupted by the entrance of the Miss Framptons and their friend, with her cousin Mary. After the proper inquiries had been exchanged, she learned that the young ladies had come to inspect certain bonnets and other finery, which Mary had received, since their last visit, from the proper authorities in London.

Julia and Sophia Frampton were long and eager in their examination ; but Miss Meredith, after a hasty survey, posted herself at the window, and kept up a broken discourse with the ladies on the sofa.

“ That spire is Hillsted Church of

course? Have you a good preacher? Is he a young man? Do you flirt with him? Sophy, dear, that bonnet wouldn't become you.—Oh, I don't know why, only I never like you in primrose colour. Oh, Miss Hilton, who lives in that white house with the portico, there, on the hill skirted with trees. The Blands! Who are the Blands? Oh! I met them at your house, didn't I, Julia?"

"Yes; you remember Georgina Bland, with the voice of a peacock, and those affected long ringlets which she shakes about when any body speaks to her?"

"But Jane Bland's lisp is worse than her sister's curls," cried Sophia; "and every body knows it is put on."

"I think Fanny the most intolerable of the set," said Miss Frampton. "Her vanity, my dear Mary! I believe she never danced with a man in her life without thinking that he was in love with her. She is the greatest flirt in existence; and she really has no good looks; but the men

think so because she gives herself beauty airs."

"Likely enough," said Mary ; " in these days you are taken very much at your own value by the world."

" Mary takes these things so coolly," said Miss Frampton, " because she is always sure of plenty of beaux ; with her fortune and her beautiful toilet, and her pretty manners, she has no need to envy any body."

Miss Meredith, not quite liking this turn of the conversation, now broke in.

" Is that your brother's horse which the groom is leading before the hall door ? What a beauty ! Is he not very fond of it ? What is its name ? There—he has come out—he is going to mount—the creature won't stand still. Oh ! my dear Miss Hilton, do speak to him, don't let him ride that dreadful wretch, (meaning the horse). Come hither and look at him, for Heaven's sake !"

Moved by this frantic adjuration, Mary

walked carelessly to the window ; which Miss Meredith, in the tumult of her feelings, flung suddenly open. The " dreadful wretch " swerved awkwardly at the sound, and lodged his master, who had just succeeded in mounting him, very comfortably on the ground.

Mary turned as pale as death ; but seeing Eustace spring up again evidently unhurt, she crossed the room, saying in her usual composed manner, " I really did not think anything in the world could have thrown Eustace."

She had scarcely spoken, when her brother threw open the door, and rushed up to her, saying with great eagerness :

" Mary, I hope I did not frighten you. No, that's all right ! Good bye—I am late."

Then, without noticing any one else, he hurried off, and they heard him set off at full gallop on the refractory horse.

All this had a great effect on the susceptible feelings of Miss Meredith, who declared with much incoherence that Mr.

Eustace had behaved divinely; first, in respect of his having intended to mount a vicious brute, which she compared in the fervour of the moment to a lion, a panther, and other wild animals; next, in respect of his being thrown; and thirdly, that he had come all the way up-stairs to re-assure his sister; this last action she termed angelic, as being the more appropriate word. And then she was seized with a paroxysm of tears, which sent Mary and the other young ladies searching over the tables for smelling-bottles. Having been refreshed by a copious shower of eau-de-cologne, she next called on her hearers to observe that Mr. Eustace was an officer, and therefore that the foregoing events were not a matter of wonder, they being, as Miss Hilton no doubt was aware, a body of people in whom all the virtues, civil and religious, were known to centre.

“Yes,” Mary said, “young officers were indeed perfection. No people made remarks on the weather with a better grace, or could

tell you more exactly how the last ball went off. Then, they were seldom troubled with information of any sort out of their profession, and even of military affairs a good many of them were entirely ignorant. And then again, if war was mentioned, they always talked so cheerfully about sending the French or the Yankees to the right about, that (particularly as they had never tried), it made one feel quite comfortable and secure on the subject."

This panegyric exactly meeting the views of Miss Meredith, assisted the eau-de-cologne so effectually in calming her spirits, that she was able to take an active part in the review of some new dresses, which Gibson was desired to bring in from Mary's wardrobe.

At the close of this exhibition, Mary proposed that they should join Mr. and Mrs. Frampton down stairs.

"Oh ! pray, not yet," said Miss Frampton. "Papa and mamma are very happy in company with the newspapers ; and besides they can quarrel better when they are

by themselves, which is their greatest enjoyment."

Constance put up her eyebrows at this speech, and then resumed her book, while the young ladies made the circuit of the room, looking at all the trifles with which it abounded.

"May I look at this miniature?" asked Miss Meredith. "Oh! I am sure it is your brother. What a charming picture! How very like! Oh, dear! I never saw any one so handsome!"

"Have you a picture of Colonel Bohun?" asked Miss Frampton, moving to the table.

"No," said Mary laughing; "I wish I had."

"I'll tell you, Julia," said Miss Sophia leaning over her sister's shoulder, "it is very well to talk of Colonel Bohun, but I think it is that quiet son of his, with the large dark eyes, who is the attraction. I have often seen him ride this way with Mr. Eustace Hilton."

“Do you think so?” returned Mary, without the least embarrassment.

“Oh! but promise me,” cried Miss Meredith in a little paroxysm of terror, “promise that you won’t tell Mr. Eustace how I admired his picture! Oh! dear, I should die!”

“No, pray don’t, my dear Miss Meredith,” said Mary. “I assure you I shall not so far indulge his vanity.”

“I’m so afraid you will,” said Miss Meredith, who ardently hoped she might. “Isn’t she mischievous? does she not look mischievous, dearest Julia? How I shall ever bear to meet him again! Oh! how foolish I am!”

Mary implicitly agreed to the last remark, but endeavoured to reassure the delicate nerves of the young lady.

“I’ll take any small vow of secrecy you like to impose,” said she. “I cannot indeed, with Rosalind, swear by my complexion; (she turned her eyes steadily upon the glass,) but on those very pretty bracelets

of your's, or upon a sheet of Strauss's waltzes, I shall be happy to protest my sincerity : Chloe here shall be witness," said she, stooping to caress the dog.

"How fond Mr. Eustace seems of Chloe," said Miss Meredith kneeling down before it. "Little darling pet, was it sorry when he fell off his horse?"

Chloe making no reply, Miss Meredith rose to her feet, and followed her party down stairs, in obedience to a summons from Mrs. Frampton.

"How heartily glad you must be to have disposed of those people," said Constance when Mary returned.

"Why, my dear," replied Mary, "they will be replaced by others of the same stamp in the course of the day ; they are not the worst of their set, by any means. The girls are very amiably disposed to the gentlemen, and also to such ladies as do not interfere at all with their little claims and plans ; witness the high favour in which I am held among them. They don't

respect their parents, (I saw your look, my dear Constance,) but then it would require a little more than the average of principle to show a becoming deference to such people as their father and mother. They are very anxious to marry, because the world's opinion is the very breath of their nostrils; and they don't take very delicate steps to accomplish their object, because the said world has this sentiment always in its mouth—Get married, honestly if you can, but get married.”

“A pretty piece of sarcasm!” said Constance smiling; “but it is something to keep your temper about them.”

“Oh!” cried Mary, “never be angry at what you cannot help. The first class of men are those who command circumstances; the second, those who know how to submit to them. But the common herd spend their lives in a vain, paltry struggle against inevitable things, and misapply the strength which might have been directed to

control such events as are left in our own hands."

Mary denied herself to morning visitors for the rest of the day, intending to pass it quietly with her cousin; but very soon after they had taken their luncheon, a servant came to inform them that Captain Bohun and Mr. Eustace were in the drawing-room.

"Here, Constance," said Mary, "I told you that you made a great impression upon Colonel Bohun, and now you see his son comes galloping over to compare you with his father's description. Oh! you have seen him before; well, he is rather a favourite of mine, not that I like young men generally; but it is not his fault that he is younger than his father. Will you come?"

"I would rather not," said Constance shrinking back, "I used to meet him when—when—in short, Mary, I don't like to see him again."

“ I will not . urge you,” said Mary taking up her work. “ I hope they have the newspapers down there, for I don’t intend to stir till I have finished this leaf. Though he is really a superior person, this Captain Bohun ; you would hardly believe the influence he has exercised over Eustace !”

“ Indeed,” said Constance.

“ I assure you, at odd times, I feel very grateful to him,” said Mary. “ By the tranquil force of example, he detained Eustace from the gaming-table, and all the other degrading follies with which we are led to believe the youthful heroes of our age beguile their leisure. And then, he is in earnest, a quality that before any other would entitle a man to claim some kindred with the old chivalry. He is not disfigured by that hard, mocking, bantering spirit, which is now your only wear in society ; and, as you might expect from such a character, his respect for women amounts to veneration.”

"I do think that a good sign," said Constance.

"And yet you will not come down?" said Mary; "well, don't be dull in my absence. I will not implore you, like Miss Meredith, not to repeat my praises to Captain Bohun, for it is very likely I shall tell him myself how I have been spending the last five minutes."

Constance sat working for some time, and then rose to look out of the window. She thought the gentlemen were paying a very long visit; but there were their horses being still led up and down before the door. Then she opened the cottage piano, and began to play all the waltzes she could recollect. She had scarcely gone through the first set, when the door opened gently, much as if the person outside was extremely doubtful of the reception he might meet with, and her cousin Eustace entered.

"Oh! it is you," she said, turning back to the piano; "now you have just put

that last waltz out of my head. How do you do ?”

“ I am come to hear that last waltz,” said Eustace taking a chair by the piano ; “ and I have brought you some heliotrope.”

“ As a bribe !” returned Constance ; “ well here is the waltz.”

“ You really play very well,” said her cousin when she had finished.

“ But that is not at all surprising,” replied Constance, “ for I have taken some pains to learn, and I am by no means stupid.”

“ I am afraid you thought me very rude this morning, coming in without wishing you good morning ; but the fact was, you see—”

“ No,” interrupted Constance, “ I did not think about it. Oh ! yes, I believe I did ; I thought you behaved rather well.”

Eustace was very much gratified by this concession, and began to turn over in his mind what compliment he should pay her.

“What a splendid hand you have, Constance,” said he, after a short silence.

“Finger, is the proper term,” said Constance with a little nod of her head, as she ran down a scale.

“No, but I mean,” insisted Eustace, “that I never saw such a beautiful hand.”

“Dear me, you are growing personal,” said Constance. “Do me the favour to ring the bell. A cup of coffee, please, Gibson. You dine at such grand hours here, that one is obliged to use precautions against starving. How nice this coffee is ; if you were to go down stairs you could get some for yourself. Mrs. Butler excels in her coffee.”

“A hint for me to make myself scarce I suppose !” said her cousin.

“Precisely,” replied Constance. “I hate to be looked at when I have a cold, and there you sit staring at my red nose and my weak eyes, in a way that would exasperate the most patient temper.”

"I obey you with the greatest reluctance," said her cousin rising.

"Have you a pencil about you? Because I should like to write that down; it is such a new remark. No don't lean on the back of my chair, for that is worse than the staring."

"You are so amusing," said Eustace; "you always say something one does not expect."

"I don't mean to say anything more at present," said Constance, "for I have a letter to write. Take a book, will you; or go on with my netting, if you must stay here."

"Eustace preferred the netting. He hung the ribbon to his spur, and went on for some time very prosperously. "Constance, I've made a long stitch."

"I thought you would," replied Constance, "take it out."

"I can't."

"Clever!" retorted Constance as she dipped her pen in the ink.

"I say, Constance?"

“ Well—another long stitch ?”

“ No—do you patronise extract of Roses for your hair sometimes ? I do always.”

“ Pleasant intelligence for the proprietors, but it does not happen to affect me.”

“ Well now,” began Eustace throwing down her netting.

“ What’s the matter ?”

“ I’m hanged if it is not all clouding over.”

“ If you were hanged,” muttered Constance, “ I should stand some chance of completing my letter.”

“ I say, have you seen anything of old Thornton for the last age ?”

“ Yes—I have.”

“ I shall go and try what I can make of the old fellow some day.”

“ If you do,” said Constance laying down her pen, “ I advise you strongly to speak plainly. Don’t drop your *r*’s in this way, my dear Sir, I wegwet extwemely that your wheumatism has been so twobelsome ; because, if you do, he will certainly cut you

off with a fourpenny-piece. Now that you may recollect my advice, go directly; good day."

And Constance shut the door on a young gentleman who was likely to inherit twelve or fourteen thousand a year, with as much alacrity as a chaperon denies herself to a miserable younger brother, whose visions of love and a cottage are impertinently connecting themselves with her fair and artful charge.

In fact, Eustace was undergoing that phase of admiration which may be coaxed and flattered, and petted into a downright proposal; but Constance would have had just as distinct an idea of accepting Tim as her cousin; and matters never went any farther between them.

She learned from Mary that Captain Bohun came over to Hillsted almost every day with Eustace; and she made up her mind to meet him accordingly; but whether from accident or from an idea that Miss D'Oyley had purposely avoided him, he came no more

during the week she passed there. She experienced an undefined feeling of vexation at this circumstance, because when one has screwed up one's courage to support any disagreeable adventure, there is something of disappointment in the effort being made to no purpose.

CHAPTER III.

ISA. Hast heard the proverb, Aurio, that truth
Lies in the bottom of a well?

ANN. 'Tis false—
'Tis set aloft as hangs the moon in Heaven,
Tracing a silver path across the deep
And stormy waters that make up man's life.

ANON.

“No answer from uncle Thornton, Harry!” said Constance one morning as the brother and sister were taking a walk together.

“And I go back to college on Tuesday!” said Harry; “but it does not signify, I shall be able to manage.”

“Look here,” said Constance stopping short and pulling off her glove; “do you think this ring is worth much?”

ing to the question, "I'll
Thornton keep his word, in spite
I dare say he was offended by
him for so much money ; now
fault. So take this to town to
accept whatever papa's goldsm
you for it."

Harry said a great deal again
but Constance was positive,
he yielded.

Now the letter which Co
written to her uncle, had arri
was suffering from a bad fit
His correspondence was neve
and he desired his sister to re
out to him. When she op

and threw it into the fire. He called the supposed tailor a fool, being at the moment in rather an irascible condition, and thought no more of the matter.

Harry received five and thirty guineas for the ring ; and being relieved of the greater part of his embarrassments, he went back to college with a clear conscience, and a very warm sense of obligation to his sister.

Time passed on with quick footsteps, for Constance was fully employed. She relieved her mother entirely from the cares of housekeeping, that she might devote more time to her husband. But then, Mrs. D'Oyley could not take long walks, and Constance was her father's companion whenever he went farther than the limits of their village. And Mrs. D'Oyley could not read aloud for five minutes together : Constance read beautifully, and she spent part of every morning in reading to her father. She was intelligent, and had been well educated ; but the books her father liked

to hear, were of a different stamp from those she had been in the habit of reading by herself. They gave a firmness to her mind, a clearness to her reasoning powers. She had never been the victim of sentiment, but these books acted as a sort of tonic to her character. She began to feel the luxury of intellectual strength. She was acquainted with Hebrew, and she always began the morning with a portion of the Hebrew bible; but she very much regretted that she knew nothing of Latin or Greek. Her father was so fond of the classics, so finished a scholar! she began to teach herself Latin; but she hoped secretly that her father would recover his sight long before she was able to read his favourite Roman historians.

One morning, when her father and mother were gone to London for the day, she thought it would be a capital opportunity to set the study in order. The books were certainly in rather a scattered condition; but now that they were in her hands, she

was resolved that nothing should exceed the neatness of their arrangement. It was a long task. She had found half a dozen volumes of Cicero on as many different shelves, and was hunting for the rest, when she was interrupted by a brisk rap at the door. She opened it, and there stood uncle Thornton.

It was rather an awkward meeting, on her part, at least. She coloured a little, and breathed quickly ; she had done all for the best, that was a comfort. She only hoped he wouldn't ask to see her ring. So she went forward and shook hands with him.

" Busy, I see !" said Mr. Thornton as he entered.

" Yes, very busy, uncle ; but I can find you a chair," said Constance, placing one for him.

The room was dusty, and Mr. Thornton began to cough.

" All this learning does not agree with

me," said he, smiling ; " let us go into the next room."

Constance followed him.

"And papa is out, unfortunately," she said.

"Never mind, I came to see you," said uncle Thornton. "Why you are grown—prettier—that's not the word, but it will do, since I saw you last. Not much grieving, I take it?"

"Yes, uncle, a great deal ; though, I think not exactly in the sense you mean. I cannot see papa losing his sight without some sorrow, though I bear it better than I did."

"Losing his sight, eh?" said Mr. Thornton ; and thereupon he whistled softly, and finished by invoking the name of Mistress Parker several times.

Constance did not know whether these expressions were meant to be sympathetic, so she said nothing.

"Do you know this ring?" said her uncle

suddenly drawing her ring from his waistcoat pocket, and holding it before her.

She was as much surprised as she had ever been in her life, how he could have come by it ; but that was not the present question.

“ Yes, uncle, it was mine,” she replied steadily.

“ Right,” said her uncle. “ You are, without exception—well, go on.”

“ Do you mean that I should tell you all about it ?” asked Constance.

“ Just so ; let us have the whole history.”

Constance told it him without reserve. “ I have not concealed Harry’s imprudence from you,” she said, “ because I know it will never reach papa’s ears through you, since you must suppose how anxious I have been to keep it from him, if I could have recourse to such extreme measures to prevent the necessity of his knowing it.”

“ I wonder if you ever told a lie,” said Mr. Thornton.

“ Not that I recollect,” returned Constance.

“ How do you think a person feels who plays a part from the cradle to the grave, mixes truth with falsehood till she cannot distinguish one from the other, never looked a fellow-creature in the face while she was speaking, lest she should read in his eyes the mistrust she ought to excite in his heart, eh, child ?”

Mr. Thornton spoke with unusual energy.

“ I should think, uncle, she would feel altogether in a tangle,” said Constance, endeavouring to realise the picture he had drawn.

Her uncle laughed heartily at her illustration, and then said : “ Well, I never received your letter ; what do you think of that ?”

“ Oh ! that accounts for it,” said Constance. “ How odd it should have miscarried !”

“ You think it did ?”

“Certainly,” returned Constance.

“Do you think that somebody (we won't mention names), might have destroyed your letter, lest by accident a few wretched coins might be diverted from her own pocket, or lest the very confidence you shewed me might be productive of still more beneficial results?”

“No, uncle,” said Constance.

“You don't believe such a thing possible?”

“Not likely, uncle! It is the kind of thing that happens in novels; it came in after people had done writing about giants and ogres. Letters are not tampered with in these days, nor wills, nor warming-pans. I think a person might very likely say an ill-natured, or even an untrue thing of me, to gain a purpose; but when you come to suppressing letters, it is too romantic, uncle Thornton.”

“Now I wonder where in the name of goodness that girl picked up all her common sense,” said Mr. Thornton; “other

Constance. "It is not fair to have it too."

"Yes it is, if I choose it, Thornton stamping his stick on
"Who is that coming up steps?"

"I think, Sir, it is Mrs. Parker."
Constance.

As she spoke, the door stood open, and that lady entered.

"So Mistress Parker," said Thornton leaning back in his chair and tapping his stick, "so Mr. D'Oyley is gone, what do you think of that? You know it—not you!"

"Indeed, indeed! this is a
disappointment."

word. There is nothing so mysterious as duplicity, Mistress Parker ; tell that to your cobbler the next time you have him quietly to supper, when you think I am gone to town !”

This having some reference to a recent quarrel between the brother and sister, produced a gentle sigh from Mrs. Parker ; and as quarrelling is not easy where there is only one performer, he did not pursue the topic.

Mrs. Parker made polite inquiries of Constance concerning her father, and mother, and brothers, and finished by saying with many words and sighs, “ I suppose, my dear, we have not much to say about our own health at present ?”

“ She’s very well,” interposed Mr. Thornton. “ Don’t you see how well she looks ? Well enough to come down with me into Herefordshire, eh Constance ?”

“ Dear brother, if you would only consider—”

Consider—well ?” said Mr. Thornton,

leaning on the top of his stick, and looking hard at her.

“ Her poor father ! she couldn't quite leave him,” murmured Mrs. Parker.

“ Yes, she could,” returned Mr. Thornton ; “ for there's Mrs. D'Oyley to look after him. What did she marry him for ? She could, but she won't. She doesn't want my money, not a stiver of it ; she can do without it, think of that, Mistress Parker ! She won't come down to Leyton to coax me out of a legacy. Come along, Mistress Parker ; she is no company for you—or me ; she despises us ; she does nothing but tell the truth, Mrs. Parker ; think of that ! Here, make haste and get out of her way ;” and shaking hands very cordially with her as he passed, the curious old gentleman hurried Mrs. Parker down the front steps.

CHAPTER IV.

We were talking here and there—this and that.

THE STRANGER.

THE spring came in very early and warm. Constance was very glad of this for her father's sake; he could spend almost the whole day out of doors, and this to one whose in-door pursuits were of necessity narrowing fast, was important to his health and recreation.

About this time, she received another pressing invitation from her cousin Mary, to spend a few days with her at Hillsted. She had delayed going to town this year, because her brother's regiment was expected to remove to a distant part of the country, and she wished to stay at Hillsted

wished Constance to be present

Constance would very willingly
excuse herself, for her neighbor
was very much to herself for
past, and the habit of liking so
off considerably in solitude.
this very reason that Mrs. D'U
her to go, for she thought her
to give up society altogether,
mixed in it at all, her mother
practice alone would enable her
part with ease.

So she went, very much to the
satisfaction of her cousin Mary. The
dinner was spent in trying on a
lot of new bonnets, which had been
for Mary to choose from.

came Miss Hilton, in vain too Constance declared that she was not at all ambitious of making an effect at the breakfast the next day. Mary, seating herself at the cheval-glass, laughed at Gibson, and coaxed Constance, and the chip bonnet was despatched into her cousin's room.

“ Yes,” said Mary, “ I think as you remarked, Mrs. Gibson, I should look very distinguished in a white chip bonnet. The last time I wore one, I was bridesmaid to Miss Bland. There is literally no end to those Blands, Constance. I said then it should be the last time. It is a heavy trial to the complexion, isn't it, Gibson ?”

“ La ! Miss Hilton, “ you always make yourself out to have no good looks ; but I know what the gentlemen think.”

“ So do I, Gibson,” said Mary, laughing. “ They think I have a very pretty—fortune.”

“ Something besides that, Miss Hilton, I fancy,” said Gibson.

“ No, surely,” said Mary ; “ they are

not so stupid as to think I shall come in for any of the landed property, because there's Eustace. Oh! I haven't tried the lilac bonnet, that with the Honiton lace."

"That is nothing like so distinguished as the blue, Miss Hilton!" said Gibson, as she stood with a bonnet on each hand, looking prodigiously tall and grim.

"Gibson has only one idea—to look distinguished; but I mean to be simple to-morrow,—a cambric muslin gown, Gibson, and this identical lilac thing!"

"Well, and all the officers coming!" said Gibson, turning up her eyes.

"Think of that, Constance; Gibson is sure they won't make me an offer in this bonnet. It is a sort of safety-bonnet, a kind of patent preserver. Let me have another look at it, Gibson, before you put it away. You are right, it has rather a severe expression about the crown. It is certainly disagreeable to refuse a man, not by letter, that I don't mind, but *viva voce*. In the first place, you have to look thank-

ful, when you feel, at least I do, very cross ; and then you have to make a speech about honour and surprise, and I know not what, when you feel inclined to say, my good sir, you are either deluded or impertinent, for you don't care for me, and it's rude to ask for my money ; for I never had a lover, Constance."

" La ! Miss Hilton, how you do go on," said Gibson, whose hard features had relaxed into a smile, during Mary's speech.

" Well, if you don't object, dear," said Mary, rising, we will dress now, though it is so early, for one does not know what to do with the twilight ; I am not yet old enough to sit and think over past times. My black satin, Gibson."

Constance dressed with all expedition, and finding it, as her cousin said, very early, she went down into the library, with a small lamp in her hand, to choose a book. While she was looking from shelf to shelf, she heard some one enter the room, who

Bohun. In a moment she felt his
son over neck and brow. She turned
to the book shelves after a hasty
confused bow, and searched various
the volumes, while the figure
and the green lanes in which she
dined when he met them last,
swim before her dazzled eyes.
In a moment, the lamp was quietly
in her hand.

“ Will you allow me, Miss
said Captain Bohun ; “ I have
many happy hours here, that
know the arrangement of these
better than any one, except Miss F

“ I shall be much obliged to
Constance . “ that is if—oh and

Percy's Reliques," said Constance. "Thank you, I have it—I—"

"I think you have Lalla Rookh; here are the Reliques," said Captain Bohun, making the exchange in his usual calm manner. "And pray let me light you to the drawing-room, for all these flower-baskets, though very pretty, are rather in the way."

Constance stopped, and made some indistinct reply. It was a very long room, and there was no light in it but from the lamp which Captain Bohun carried; so he put her hand quietly through his arm, and led her into the drawing-room. There was no one in the room. He moved a chair towards her, and setting down the lamp, leaned against the chimney-piece a little way off. Constance opened her book, and tried to read as fast as she could.

"Miss Hilton is quite antique in her tastes," said Captain Bohun, after a short silence. "That lamp is of the genuine Pompeii fashion."

Constance started as he spoke, and then said, "Yes, it was ;" and thinking perhaps she ought not to read when he was in the room, she laid down the book, and looked uncomfortable.

He took up the book and glanced over it. It was open at the ballad of the Nut-brown Maid, and that led to some discussion on the merits of the Erle's son, and his singular experiment.

Constance denied the mock outlaw any merit at all. It was unpardonable in him to try his lady's faith, for suspicion is high treason against love. She wished the Nut-brown lady had acted like Julia in the Rivals, and dismissed her lover when she learned his plot."

Captain Bohun said that would have been opposed to the laws that governed fiction in those times, which to end well, must end with a marriage ; besides, he reminded her that Julia relented in the last scene, or she would have broken the in-

variable semi-circle that forms round the foot-lights at the close of every comedy.

Constance denied that the semi-circle was a sufficient reason for Julia's forgiveness ; but she said that in the days of the Nut-brown Maid, marriage was an imperative object with women."

" In those days, you think !" said Captain Bohun.

It was provoking to hear him say this so quietly, looking straight into the fire too, as if he meant nothing particular. Constance could not help laughing, at which he relaxed into a smile.

" I know you would imply that it is quite as great an object in the present day," she said. " But I meant, when I called it imperative, that women in that time required a husband to protect their lives and properties, which the law is so obliging as to do now."

" And are you one of the few who prefer the sweet discord of these Saxon lines to

Mary as she entered, “ for
you know, was very Saxon.
Nut-brown Maid ; very musical
ties concerned, I dare say :

For in my mynde
Of all mankynde
I love but you alone,

“ But this is my favourite, C

The winter weather itt waxeth col
And froste doth freeze on every hi
And Boreas blows his blasts so bo

“ There’s alliteration for you.
how the homely roughness of
pleases my ear :

My cloak, it was a very good cloal
It ha’ been always true to the wea

at least, I hope I have quoted rightly, for I cannot find the page."

"The great charm of these early writers," said Captain Bohun, "is their freedom from egotism."

"True," said Mary; "you form absolutely no idea of the men themselves by their writings, and this is a virtue never to be observed after Charles the First's age. The poetry of life was broken up by the Rebellion, and the spirit which animated men to forget themselves, went altogether out of print as well as out of fashion."

Captain Bohun asked Constance if she admired Schiller's ballads, and she confessed that she did not understand German.

"The Germans are a more melancholy people than the English," said Mary, "though we have a character for suicide, their writings shew it."

"But the writings of a people are hardly

an evidence of their disposition," said Captain Bohun ; " witness the Italians, a people all fervour, with a style, whether in prose or poetry, remarkable for anything but energy."

" The Germans have more genius than the English," said Constance ; " and genius is always melancholy."

" What shall we say to Shakspeare?" asked Mary.

" I think we should distinguish between creative and adaptive genius. Shakspeare is the head of the one, as Byron of the other class. The temperament of men of genius must be melancholy. The only writings in which Shakspeare has suffered traces of his own emotions to appear, are tinged with a profound spirit of sadness."

" Yes, his sonnets," said Constance.

" I question if great gaiety of temperament can exist either with much thought or much impulse," said Captain Bohun.

“ No,” said Mary ; “ for reason on the one hand, and the experience of disappointment on the other, will forbid it.”

“ Thus,” said Captain Bohun, “ Byron, who wrote at the suggestion of his own feelings, ran through all the phases of his morbid sufferings. He imagined actually nothing—never related what he had not felt or seen in some shape or other. But Shakspeare conceived characters and situations to which he had no affinity ; and instead of reflecting endless pictures of the shadows on his own heart, traced in characters of light the whole mighty range of human joy and sorrow.”

“ You certainly do *think*,” said Mary, looking up at Captain Bohun, “ though you are in the army ; but then you don’t like it, that is one comfort.”

“ A singular consolation,” he said, laughing, “ for a man to belong to a profession that he hates !”

“ By the bye,” said Mary, “ I knew I had a question to ask you. You remem-

officer, who likewise procured his d
by the fact of his having written
the Greek character, I think from
cles, in the stable, underneath h
Now I wonder how many officers
regiment could distinguish Gre
Chinese ?”

“ I really could not undertake
replied Captain Bohun, laughing
Eustace ; here he comes.”

“ Oh ! don’t ask me anything
Eustace, sinking on a sofa. “
soned, utterly poisoned ; my se
put the wrong scent on my han
Verbena, is not it horrid ? I onl
out coming down stairs ; it has

Eustace. What business have you to know the name of perfumes, unless, indeed, you wish to sit for the portrait of Hotspur's fop !” And to relieve her feelings, she muttered the lines beginning :

He was perfumed like a milliner,

with a keenness of expression that highly amused Captain Bohun, and extorted from Eustace his usual exclamation of, “ What an idea !”

CHAPTER V.

For I can neither write, nor read, nor speak,
That any man shall hope to profit by me,
And for my languages they are so many
That put them altogether they will scarce
Serve to beg single beer in.—

THE CAPTAIN.

“UPON my word, Constance, if I am ever to be envious of you, I had better begin this morning,” said Mary, as her cousin entered her dressing-room on the day of the breakfast ; “ what do you think of Miss D'Oyley to-day, Gibson ? ”

“ Miss D'Oyley looks remarkably well, Miss Hilton,” said Gibson, in rather a stately manner ; for she had not forgotten

the young lady's rejection of the chip bonnet which was now helping, amazingly, the very pretty looks of Constance.

“ But if you had taken my advice, Miss Hilton—”

“ I should doubtless at this moment be looking exactly as well as my cousin—as young too—

As a rose at fairest ;
Neither a bud nor blown.

said Mary laughing ; “ but I'll thank you, Gibson, for a pair of straw coloured gloves, notwithstanding.”

“ Well, Miss Hilton, it is of no use my saying anything,” said Gibson handing her the gloves.

“ Thank you, Gibson ; you shall choose my ball dress if you like.”

“ Oh ! that's settled, thank goodness gracious,” said Gibson, arranging her young lady's black silk mantle ; “ because when young ladies begin to fancy themselves old—”

“ Yes, when they get hold of that idea a little earlier than their neighbours,” said Mary pushing back the cheval-glass, “ what do you think, Constance ; does it not look rather clever ? ”

They went down into the gardens, where the company had just begun to assemble ; and the beautiful gardens were wonderfully enlivened by groups of well dressed women ; and Eustace had invited a number of officers, and the ladies were very well pleased at it ; and the band of his regiment was stationed in the gardens, and that was another delightful circumstance.

“ If you will remain under this tree,” said Mary, “ while I receive some of the people, I shall know where to find you. Eustace, oh ! I am glad you are early, there is nothing for you to do yet but to amuse Constance, till I come back.”

“ Very delighted, I am sure ! ” said Eustace. “ What a fine day ! ”

“ Fortunately for our bonnets and yo' tempers,” said Constance ; “ rain on su an occasion would spoil both.”

“ It would be a pity I'm sure, to spoil such a very pretty bonnet,” said Eustace.

Constance made no reply to this remark, and conversation seemed likely to drop between them.

“ That's Sinclair,” said Eustace pointing with his stick through the trees ; and there's Morton ; and there's Heywood ; some of our fellows, you know.

“ Indeed,” returned Constance ; “ do they differ from any other people's fellows ?”

“ Oh ! Sinclair is rather odd, he makes his horse take snuff ; and he tried to teach a Newfoundland dog to blow the trumpet. But the brute would not learn, and bit him into the bargain.”

“ How very ungrateful !” said Constance.

“ Yes,” replied Eustace. “ We think him mad sometimes. I'll introduce him to you.”

“ Thank you,” said Constance ; and Eustace having summoned his friend, the introduction took place.

Mr. Sinclair stared at Constance, and asked her if she did not think the gardens very beautiful ; and having ascertained that she did, he applied himself to gathering the buds from a rose tree that grew near, and eating them. Eustace then thought that he saw Colonel Bohun and his governor (*anglicé* his father) walking in another part of the garden, so he gave Constance in charge of Mr. Sinclair, and went away, going through the broadsword exercise with his stick as he went ; a commendable practice which may be often observed in young officers.

Now Constance was in rather an indolent humour, and had not the slightest intention of amusing Mr. Sinclair, which is the present order of things when a young woman is in company with a young man. She sat playing with the fringe of her parasol and looking at the company as they moved about the lawn, until she quite forgot his presence. He remained however just where he was left, eating rose-buds,

and looking from time to time at Constance, wondering very much why she did not look at him.

Now Mr. Sinclair would succeed to a large property at his father's death, and he therefore lived in a perpetual state of alarm lest any lady should catch him ; a cause of terror that did not seem very reasonable, for to the uninitiated, making an offer appears quite a voluntary affair.

However when he saw that she had forgotten all about him, he took courage and was going to address her, when she turned her head, and thus recalling him to her remembrance she held out her hand for a rose-bud.

"Are they nice?" said she ; "give me one, please."

Something original in her manner seemed to take his fancy ; he complied with her request, and drew a garden chair close to hers.

"Upon my word," said he, "I don't

gave her to understand that, was, he could only have been her ; at which she laughed still

He then told her it was shooting wild ducks, for his conversation was liable to transition surprised Constance, as her conversation with him was so recent. He told him she could not enter into discussions on that subject, since she —a reply that seemed to divide exceedingly. He then pronounced a lyric on the figure of a young man was passing, which he compared to a Champagne bottle. This was a pique Constance ; but she, laughing,

plea that it was a proof of his admiration to compare the lady to whatever he liked best, so that they managed to amuse each other tolerably, till Mary came up to them, leaning on the arm of Captain Bohun, and surrounded by two or three dashing looking young ladies whom Constance discovered to be the Frampton party.

Mr. Sinclair came to the back of Mary's chair, and Captain Bohun was talking in a low voice to Constance, about the waltzes that the band was playing; and the Frampton party flourished their little parasols, and wished that some other officers would come that way.

It so happened that Mary inquired of Mr. Sinclair after his Newfoundland dog; and suggested to Constance that she ought to provide herself with such a one, to save any little children that might be drowning in her neighbourhood. This brought out the story of the mill-stream, which did not seem to afford any entertainment to the Miss Framptons or their little friend Miss

Meredith. Captain Bohun said something in a still lower tone to Constance which made her blush, and Mr. Sinclair exclaimed "Upon my soul!" which, no doubt, meant a great deal; and moreover told Constance he should be quite happy if she would have his Newfoundland dog. Constance said she would rather not, and she wished they would talk of something else, for she caught such a dreadful cold on that occasion that if people only mentioned it, she always began to sneeze. Mr. Sinclair came round directly in front of her, and began asking a number of questions; such as, whether the water was very cold or very deep, whether the child was an ugly little brute, and whether she felt much frightened. Constance refused to answer his questions, and a sort of skirmish ensued between them, with a great deal of laughing from all parties except the three young ladies; and the Eustace joined them with two other officers and the story was told over again; and Constance said she would positively

away, for the very thoughts of it made her teeth chatter ; but Mr. Sinclair would not make any room for her, so she could not get out of the circle.

Then one of the officers advised her that she should always wear her medal in full dress, like a Waterloo medal; and Constance replied that if she were to be so ridiculous, she would not be wearing it now, as she was, as all the world might see in *demi-toilette*. And then arose a discussion as to what was a lady's full dress, in the course of which the officers shewed themselves so well versed in the matters of muslins and silks, that Constance frankly told them that her private opinion was, that they had all served a year or two with Howell and James, before they entered her Majesty's service. Captain Bohun smiled at this panegyric ; for the rest they laughed loudly, and told her she was very severe.

“ Come, now let us talk of something wise,” said Constance. “ Who has read the Bridgewater Treatises ?”

Everybody laughed at the notion, it was quite amusing. Mr. Sinclair said he never read at all, which was very possible. Eustace asked who had written them, and a very young officer told him he was fairly caught there for who could have written the Bridgewater Treatises, but a fellow named Bridgewater ?

“ Perhaps,” said Constance, “ after this discovery, the gentleman will tell us who wrote the letters of Junius ?”

The young officer did not seem to argue by analogy, for he said, “ Oh ! that was a secret ; he did not believe any body knew.” And then after eyeing Constance for some time, much as a little boy eyes a new rocking-horse which he would like to steal, he went up to Eustace and begged to be introduced to “ that pretty creature.”

“ Mr. Heywood, my cousin, Miss D'Oyley.”

These few words seemed to give him the privilege to play with her parasol, and to ask for her bouquet, and to pay her so

many compliments, that if he had not been so very young and so very silly, she would have been quite offended with him.

He might be about seventeen, with the manners of a child of five years old. Notwithstanding the softness of his voice and appearance, he was a very wicked boy, swearing awfully when ladies were not present, and gaming and betting high whenever he had the opportunity. He was a very hard rider, and the members of the — hunt had a great respect for him. He knew the broadsword exercise, and all the notes on the guitar ; and he could very nearly play the Barcarolle in Masaniello. He could drink maraschino in the morning, and smoke half a cigar without feeling very ill. Besides this, he had the honour to be nephew to Lord Westland, who was extremely proud of him.

Near him stood his particular friend Captain Morton ; and as young ladies can never hear enough about officers, it may be

reply by a short, naïf—
Eighth on the stage. He
very much in the air ; and
were talking to the young
rather apart in an attitude
at once weariness and
Heywood was constantly
him, and saying little th
him smile haughtily, and
again to Constance. F
things was too bad to last
not to have four officers a
her, talking and laughi
Bohun laughing at the
said. A servant bringi
caused a little moving,
Miss Meredith attacked

relative to his profession, which gave him an opportunity of drawing somewhat on his imagination, although between his wish to deceive her, and his fear of being "caught," his answers were rather laconic.

"You officers lead such nice idle lives, don't you?"

"Oh! lord, no!"

"Dear me, what have you to do?"

"Why in the first place there's parade."

"La! what is parade?"

"Oh! we assemble all the men, and count all the buttons on their jackets, to see whether they have swallowed any."

"Dear me, what should they do that for?"

"Because they are hungry I suppose."

"But why don't you give them food?"

"So we do, once a week."

"Only once a week?"

"Oh! that is quite often enough, when you are used to it."

"But," said Miss Meredith with a very

“How?”

“By hanging them immediately—do you not often see a man hanging from a barrack window?”

“La! no.”

“Very odd—next time you are in the barracks, just look out.”

Here Mr. Sinclair became so certain she would catch him as he was engaged in such instructive amusement that he turned the subject over to Constance.

“Did you ever know such a fellow?” he asked.

“Why, if we were to meet him, of either party, I think you would say as much nonsense as the young fellow.”

“ True ! sense ought not to be wasted.”

“ Never waste any scarce thing,” said she laughing.

“ What a scarce thing a pretty laugh is.” said Mr. Sinclair looking full at Constance.

“ A hint for me to be grave I suppose,” she replied ; but she did not take the hint.

The party broke up. Eustace who had wandered away came back to tell Captain Bohun that his ‘ governor ’ wished to introduce him to some one, and he was therefore obliged to relinquish his place by the side of Constance. Mr. Sinclair offered her his arm to take a stroll through the grounds, until breakfast time ; and she, partly to get away from the “angry eyes” of the Frampton party, accepted it.

“ She is soon consoled, however,” said Mrs. Maddox, as she stood with Mrs. Frampton, watching Constance walking on the grass near the canal with Mr. Sinclair.

“ An immense match !” said Mrs. Frampton, with a sigh.

“ I suppose he will leave the army when he marries ? ”

“ I always thought,” said Mrs. Maddox, “ that he was a great admirer of your Julia.”

“ Ay ! but then Julia gave him no encouragement.”

“ Then indeed,” said Mrs Maddox laughing behind her parasol, “ it is no wonder, Miss D'Oyley seems to be kinder.

“ There ! ” cried Mrs. Frampton, “ there, my dear Mrs. Maddox, he is actually gathering flowers for her. Sinclair gathering flowers for a young lady ! ”

“ It's all settled then, you may depend,” returned Mrs. Maddox. “ Well, at any rate that designing Jane Bland won't succeed.”

“ Why look, she has actually thrown her flowers into the water.”

“ So she has, and he is trying to fish them out with his stick. Bless my heart ! he will fall in if he does not mind.”

“ And she stands there laughing at him,” cried Mrs. Frampton.

"I really don't know what to believe," said Mrs. Maddox.

"He is insane, I always thought," remarked Mrs. Frampton.

"And very ugly," said her friend.

"And not half so rich as they make him out," exclaimed Mrs. Frampton.

"And a complete reprobate," echoed Mrs. Maddox.

"He stands in a pastry cook's shop, and pelts the servant girls from the window with barley sugar kisses," cried Mrs. Frampton.

"What a husband!" said Mrs. Maddox, with a sigh.

This was their deliberate opinion of a man whom they had severally hunted for their daughters, during the last six months.

At this crisis, Captain Bohun came up to Constance, and said that Miss Hilton had deputed him to take her in to breakfast. Mr. Sinclair, who seemed to have a perception that he was safe with Constance, followed close on their footsteps. He made

up his mind that she must be engaged: how could there be a doubt indeed on the subject when she laughed at his compliments, and seemed all the time equally willing that he should go or stay. In any other point of view it would have been rather mortifying; but as it was, of course he could not expect that she would make any effort to retain him. This point being settled to his satisfaction, he placed himself on the other side of Constance at table, and nearly drove the Framptons distracted by his assiduities.

CHAPTER VI.

ROM.—A torch for me—let wantons light of heart
Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels ;
For I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase
I'll be a candle holder and look on.—

ROMEO AND JULIET.

A BALL! the subject never seems to tire ; a novel might just as well be without a marriage, as a ball. For mine own poor part I detest the subject cordially. It may be turned into poetry, I allow ; and gliding forms, and gentle whispers, and fairy feet, are very pretty sounds to introduce into rhyme, but the realities are somewhat different. Perhaps there may be in the room, if you are very fortunate, two or three women who nearly approach the confines

of beauty ; perhaps one of these might even content a painter. There will be also six pretty women ; things with good complexions and bad noses, and there will be two or three dozen women with every possible defect in face and figure, who will severally be pronounced by those accurate judges, the men, to be splendid, or lovely, or nice creatures, in exact proportion to their length and breadth ; as for the rest, you will find them ill drest and ill looking to a degree that is uncomfortable to contemplate.

And this crowd is come to market ! the thing is written, and spoken, and thought until there is no doubt about it. A gentleman about to go to India once said he would never marry one of those fair exportations who are regularly furnished forth to the best bidder. “ Why,” said a person in company, “ they do not go out with a more settled determination to offer themselves for sale, than every girl does in England who enters a ball room.”

The exceptions obtain no credit for other

motives ; therefore unless they can bear to have such things said of them, they had better keep away.

However the present scene is not the ball room, but the conservatory adjoining, in which, beside the small fountain which rose and fell in glittering threads, from a marble basin filled with gold fish, sat Constance, in a double dress of soft white muslin, that fell all around her like a cloud, with a superb bouquet of deeply coloured geraniums in her bosom, and a natural wreath of white camellias, the manufacture of Mrs. Gibson, round her back hair.

She looked lovelier than ever. The excitement of the music and the glittering scene that passed and repassed the glass-doors before her, lit up her eyes with unusual brilliancy, while the rich colour rose to her cheek, and gave a contrast to the delicate whiteness of her neck and brow. She had been feeding the gold fish with crumbs of biscuit, and now raising her head, she surveyed the assembly in the

best possible fashion—namely, through a glass.

The whole length of the ball-room was before her. Quadrilles were going on already, and the walls were lined with elderly women, with here and there an elderly gentleman taking snuff and talking to the ladies. These were few in number, and offered but little interruption to the speculations of the mammas, who were engaged in watching every whisper and every look that passed between the partners.

She noticed the portly person of Mrs. Frampton, and the tall rigid figure of Mrs. Maddox. She could not very plainly distinguish the quadrille at the other end of the room, but she had no doubt that the daughters of those ladies were figuring in it, from the direction of their mothers' eyes.

Close to the door was a group of officers, looking on with a very critical air. One of them was Mr. Sinclair, and near to him

stood her cousin Eustace, swinging one of the tassels of his dress to and fro, and trying to reach Mr. Sinclair with it: when he succeeded, he looked very much gratified. Whether this instructive spectacle suggested the notion to her or not, I cannot tell; but she exclaimed, after the pause of a few minutes, as if thinking aloud, "I wonder how it feels to be stupid!"

Now truth compels me to state that she was not alone, for Captain Bohun was leaning against the edge of the fountain, contemplating her with much satisfaction, and filling up the pauses of conversation, by breaking the biscuit into pieces by way of helping her to feed the fish.

He laughed as she uttered the foregoing speculative remark, and replied: "Very much as it feels to be intoxicated, I should imagine; you cannot experience the one; but it is a comfort to know that the other is in your power, if your curiosity should grow insupportable."

"I am not very curious," returned Constance.

"I wonder what put such an odd idea into your head?" said Captain Bohun.

"If you will promise not to tell," said Constance looking mysterious, and she pointed through the glass doors to her cousin, who still stood amusing himself with his tassels.

"Oh, Eustace!" said Captain Bohun smiling, "always, Miss D'Oyley, mistrust the dulness of a person whose eyebrows rise sharply in the centre, like his."

"Oh yes! they are notched," said Constance, leaning forward to look at her cousin; "but don't think ill of my penetration, for I never knew he had eyebrows before. By the bye, have you studied physiognomy?"

"A little: not after Lavater, but after nature."

"And what conclusions have you arrived at?"

“ That I am rather more likely to make blunders with respect to character than if I let the science alone !”

“ That is because you have not learned enough of it I suppose,” said Constance ; “ but I think you may generally trust to a first impression of a face.”

“ Oh yès ! Impressions are safe things,” he said ; “ but a wrong theory is the—”

“ Exactly ;” said Constance, arresting the doubtful termination ; “ and have you any quarrel with Lavater ?”

“ None, except that, from the very circumstances of his life, he was ill-fitted for the investigation of that particular science, living as he did from youth to age in a provincial Swiss town.”

“ Zurich was not it ?”

“ Yes. He had not a sufficient variety of heads to study from. A great capital would have been his proper sphere ; as it is, there seems to be a family likeness in all his specimens.”

“Do you think fish can hear?” asked Constance.

“Why we are talking no secrets,” said Captain Bohun.

“No, but as a matter of science!”

“People say not,” replied Captain Bohun.

“People will say anything,” said Constance. “I should like to try, I will blind-fold one and put it in that china jar by itself.”

Captain Bohun went for the china jar, and threw out some flowers which it held. Constance untied the ribbon from her bouquet and it fell to pieces; she gave it him to make up, while she caught one of the gold-fish.

She found this rather more difficult than she had imagined: they were a good deal stronger than she fancied, and sprang from her hand as fast as she seized them. While she was chasing them round the basin, her white arms gleaming whiter in the sparkling

water, and Captain Bohun was laughing at her repeated failures, her cousin Mary came in, and stood quietly looking on, for a few moments unperceived.

“Why, what are you two about?” she said at last.

“Trying experiments in acoustics!” said Captain Bohun.

“A very pretty diversion!” said Mary; “have you been dull during the quadrille? I hope you admired Miss Meredith’s dancing.”

“I did not see it,” replied Constance.

“Nor I,” said Captain Bohun.

Mary glanced her dark eyes mischievously from one to the other, and then turned to her brother who had followed her.

“I say, Mary, will you waltz with Sinclair?” he asked.

“No!” returned Mary positively. “I am not going to dance with any one who wears a red coat to-night.”

“And why?”

white, nothing looks so we

“Then I am sure,” said
ing to Constance, “I hope
tunate.”

“Thank you,” said Constance
mean to dance at all.”

“Now that is very sensible,
tace, “for what is the use
wish all girls were as reasonable
Constance.” After this remark
into a confidential assurance
looking divinely.

“What is the use of
asked, not at all appeased by
of the sentence. “I’ll tell
degree less lazy than sitting

upon us, Miss D'Oyley," said Mr. Sinclair, who now joined the party round Constance.

"What is life without a cigar?"

"True!" said Constance, "*il faut vivre*; though some people might be inclined to say in your case, like the French judge, *Je n'y vois pas la nécessité*!"

"Your dress is quite *manquée* without your bouquet," said Mary. "Have you made a present of it to Captain Bohun?"

"Oh, no!" said Constance hastily.

"Miss D'Oyley employed me to make it up again, when she took the ribbon off to blind the fish," said Captain Bohun.

Mr. Sinclair asked the particulars, and was quite delighted at the idea; he said it was the best thing he had ever heard, which made Constance think he had not been much in the habit of hearing good things.

"Now I must go," said Mary; "I have some serious responsibilities in the next

gaged ; which as he was
flowers to put into Miss D'(
might bear two interpretat
clair inquired if Miss Hilto
obdurate, and finding that
should wait for a galope. :
his stars nobody expected
He really regretted they
move so soon, for he h
women about C—— into &
ing that they never looked
expected him to ask them.

“ That I can well belie
stance. “ Dance with you
Eustace, I had rather dan
pillar : we should get on a'

--

stance ; " all I say, is merely to relieve my feelings."

" He is such an idle fellow !" said Mr. Sinclair.

" So he is," returned Constance eagerly. " And what is worse, he makes a merit of it."

Here Captain Bohun asked Constance for the ribbon to tie her bouquet.

" I dropped it, I think," said Constance ; " look for it, somebody."

Eustace actually went on one knee to search. Mr. Sinclair, after warning Constance that if he found it he should keep it, joined him.

" Here comes the gentleman who knew all about Junius," said Constance ; " he will be sure to find it, if it is above ground."

" Now what are you looking for ?" said Mr. Heywood. " A blue ribbon ? La ! why there it is close by you, Hilton. Well, I never, oh ! dear, I do believe you meant to steal it."

“ So it is !” said Eustace, picking it up.

“ Don’t !” said Mr. Heywood stopping him, “ I’ve a right, have not I now ? I found it, did not I, Sinclair ?” And with the air of a little boy who had been very much spoiled, he handed the ribbon to Constance.

She laughed so much that she could scarcely thank him, and began to tie it round the nosegay which Captain Bohun held. Mr. Heywood came round to the back of her chair, and told her that he never had in his whole life, seen any thing so beautiful as the way she had dressed her hair. Now the waltz being over, a large party of young ladies happened to pass the conservatory, and saw Constance pretty much surrounded as she had been in the gardens. What made the matter more serious was, that the gentlemen were for the most part very good matches, Eustace and Mr. Sinclair in particular ; even Mr. Heywood, if he could have contrived to be a little older, would not have been a person

to despise. So that it became the duty of the young ladies to interrupt Constance in her pursuit, which duty they performed immediately by entering the conservatory.

“I’m afraid, dear!” said Miss Frampton advancing to Constance, “oh! how do you do, Captain Bohun? I had no idea that you were here to night—I’m afraid you have a headache, you look so heavy about the eyes.”

“No, indeed, thank you;” said Constance.

“Oh! she looks as if her poor dear head was suffering,” said Miss Meredith. “I dare say the flowers don’t suit her. I am sure those gardenias are enough to—don’t you think so, Mr. Hilton?”

Nothing like asking a man for his opinion! “Yes,” he said, “they were very powerful, though he liked them;” and he gathered a branch and asked Miss Meredith “if she found the scent affect her head?”

“ Oh ! no ; nothing could be more exquisite : only she knew some people—did he like the vocal quadrilles ? Had he been dancing ? Oh ! how naughty ! ”

Here Eustace took possession of her fan ; she pointed out some carved figures on the ivory handle, and asked him if they were pretty. He stooped down, and whispered something to her ; and she laughed and wondered what Mr. Hilton could mean.

Constance, far from regretting that one gentleman had been withdrawn from her train, was in a state of great delight at this spectacle. Captain Bohun thought he had not been far wrong when he said she was unlike other women.

Miss Sophia asked Mr. Sinclair if he meant to dance the next quadrille ; and he said that if Miss D'Oyley would allow him, he would rather remain where he was : Constance, after thinking a little, said he might, if he could not find a partner.

Now the fountain at the end of the con-

servatory was placed in the centre of a small alcove fitted up with low cushioned seats, and here the whole party was collected, while Mr. Heywood standing behind Miss D'Oyley's chair, looked on, like a child at a pantomime. At last he made his reflections public in the following terms :

“ Well I never ! if Miss D'Oyley does not look like one of the Arabian Nights, with a lot of slaves round her ! ”

The young ladies looked very indignant at being compared to slaves ; but Mr. Sinclair said “ Capital ! ” and Eustace, “ What an idea ! ” So they laughed, and said they thought Mr. Heywood quite droll and clever to have thought of such a thing ; and Constance was equally amused at being compared to an Arabian night, so that Mr. Heywood was in a fair way to earn a reputation for talent.

The next quadrille was forming. Miss Frampton was claimed by her partner, and Miss Sophia tried to look at ease under the

consciousness that she was not engaged at all. Eustace looked at Miss Meredith, and she returned the compliment by sundry glances expressive of great admiration. He thought he really would for once ask her to dance ; poor thing ! she was certainly very much in love with him. He thought it could do him no harm just to walk through one set of quadrilles. He had just made up his mind, when his eye was caught by his cousin's long brown ringlets falling back, as she sat with her head raised, talking to Captain Bohun who stood beside her, her clasped hands resting on the marble basin, and an air of almost transparent delicacy diffused over her whole person by the dim light of a cluster of ground glass lamps that hung among the creepers just over her head. No ! he would not dance with Miss Meredith. It was a bore ! She was too short ; and he rather thought she had large feet ; besides the conser-

vatory was cool. He should stay where he was ; so he ordered a servant to bring in some ices, and settled himself beside Constance until supper time.

CHAPTER VII.

And see—and mark this more especially
If after maskings, dances, or the like
She fall into the calmness of her home
Without a fevered beating of the heart
After more revelry—take up her life
Just where she laid it down—and willingly.

ANON.

“Is it possible,” said Mary, to a group of ladies and gentlemen who sat under the trees at a little distance from the house; “is it possible we are all here at this time in the morning, only half past one by my watch. Eustace, have you nearly breakfasted? And, Constance, you provoking creature, netting away as if you had not been sitting up all night!”

“But I have no particular right to be

tired," said Constance. "I was so quiet, you know."

Mr. Sinclair congratulated Constance on her looks that morning. It was very hard, he thought, for ladies who had been winning hearts overnight, to come down the next day looking like spectres, and undo all their spells.

"The sooner such frostwork spells are dissolved, the better I think," said Mary quietly. "What a brilliant parrot you are working, Miss Frampton; and you, my dear Sophia, busy with your sketch-book! And how very wrong it seems in me to be doing nothing! Could not I prevail on you, Miss Meredith, to put down that bit of lace, just to keep me in countenance?"

Miss Meredith laughed very much, for she had fine teeth; but she went on working.

"Then you must read to me, Captain Bohun," said Mary. I see you have a book in your hand."

“ But one hardly suited to the occasion,” he said, “ Bacon’s Essays !”

“ The very thing !” said Mary. “ I am outgrowing my love of fiction. I have seen enough of life to begin to dissect it, and there never was a writer who could more assist me in the attempt.”

“ Yes—he had pretty well taken the measure of all common minds,” said Captain Bohun.

“ Not one lofty sentiment in the whole book, is there ?” said Mary. “ As he says of the common people, he had of the highest virtues no sense or perceiving at all. Expediency is his motto throughout. Give me the book, I will find something to interest everybody.”

“ Did you ever hear of the gentleman before, Eustace ?” asked Constance.

“ Bacon—Oh ! I know all about him—he was a cheating sort of a fellow,” returned Eustace.

“ Listen to this, gentlemen,” said Mary.

'Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions embrace more than they can hold—stir more than they can quiet—fly to the end without consideration of the means and degrees : pursue some few principles which they have chanced upon absurdly—and that which doubleth all errors, will not acknowledge or retract them, like an unready horse, that will neither stop nor turn.' Do you think things have altered much in the last three hundred years ?''

Miss Meredith said she never heard any thing so scandalous as that naughty Lord Bacon ! The Framptons agreed with her. Eustace said, after all he did not see so much harm in the character ; upon which Miss Meredith came round, and said so too.

“ What I chiefly admire in these Essays,” said Mary, is that they give you, more than any biography, an intimate knowledge of Bacon's tastes and feelings. It certainly is pleasant to know of the greatest benefactor

that science ever had, what flowers he liked ; and what shows ; what was his taste in music, and in what degree of contempt he held the fair sex. Here is a wily touch of the old courtier ! ‘ For embowed windows I hold them of good use ; for they be pretty retiring places for conference.’ ”

“ By the bye,” said Constance, “ why is he not a poet ? His pages are crowded with similes, more just and brilliant than those of Shakespeare himself.”

“ Because he wrote without emotion !” said Captain Bohun ; “ the only boundary that can be traced between prose and poetry,* and therefore his Essay on gardening comes nearer than any other to the sentiment of poetry. This is delicious— ‘ And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air, (where it comes and goes, like the warbling of music) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight, than to know what be the

* See an admirable paper on the Philosophy of poetry in Blackwood’s Magazine.

ers and plants that do best perfume the
 , ,

And then follows such a quaint catalogue," said Mary, "so prettily expressed! Then, Constance: 'Roses damask and red, fast flowers of their smells so that you walk by a whole row of them, and find nothing of their sweetness, yea though it be in a morning's dew.' 'That which above all others yields the sweetest smell in the garden is the violet; especially the white double violet, which comes twice a year, about the middle of April, and about Bartholomew tide.' And did you know this, Constance? 'Next to that is the musk rose; and the strawberry leaves dying, with a most excellent cordial smell.' "

'No," said Constance; "but I am sure of one thing; he could not have been so very bad, to retain such pure tastes."

'That is the worst of it!" said Captain Mun. "He was not very bad; a philosopher ought not to have indulged in petty

larceny : he had much better have tried his hand at high treason."

"So I think," said Mary laughing; "though I don't defend the morality of your remark."

Now Mr. Sinclair, not being, it will be believed, much interested in this discussion, was permitting Miss Frampton to amuse him by telling him anecdotes of all their mutual friends, which was very kind and condescending ; and she was engaged in finding fault with the looks, and manners, and dresses of the Blands on the preceding evening. Mr. Sinclair said he had hardly seen them, for he had taken refuge in the conservatory, very much to get out of their way. Jane Bland did pursue him so awfully !

Miss Frampton laughed a good deal at this account, little thinking that Mr. Sinclair would very likely say the same thing of her to the Blands the next time he met them.

Mr. Heywood was diligently employed in smashing a snail to pieces with his stick at the other end of the walk ; looking up when any one addressed a question to him, and as often resuming his employment when he had made a reply.

Miss Sophia was engaged in sketching the front of Hillsted Park from the spot where they sat. She was certainly not a great proficient, and she laboured under a slight mistake in thinking any accomplishment a means of attraction unless it is excelled in. She toiled away at the windows and the chimneys, and the large beech in vain.

At last she appealed to Mary, after having solicited Eustace to help her, and being told that he hadn't the least idea!—a common and remarkably correct phrase of his as applied to any branch of knowledge.

“ Oh !” said Mary at last, after a vain attempt to discover the hall door in the sketch before her, “ Mr. Sinclair can draw !”

He certainly could ; he was rather a good instance of talents utterly wasted for want of cultivation. He could not help drawing ; he never took a pen in his hand, without sketching portraits of dogs, and rats, and ferrets, and horses. His letters to his friends were decorated with greyhounds, and foxes, and stags, scampering over the paper in all directions. He never studied the art ; (that would be too much to expect!) because he had a great deal of time on his hands. It is your people who are pressed for time that make good use of it. In the present instance he put in the proper touch to the beech Miss Sophia had been drawing, reduced one of the windows which was travelling beyond the roof, and set up a stack of chimneys that was leaning dangerously ; he then scribbled four wiry terriers on the margin, and resigned the book to its owner, who told him it was wonderful to see how he drew !

“ Wonderful indeed ! ” said Miss Sophia

gazing on the terriers with evident rapture.

"How I should like to draw dogs; are they hard?"

"No, not dogs! I'll tell you though, it's very odd, cows are;" said Mr. Sinclair.

"So I should think," said Miss Sophia; "but I dare say you can draw them."

"Sometimes—some days I can't draw at all—I don't know why."

"How strange! I should not wonder if it was genius," said Miss Sophia.

"No, on my word," said Mr. Sinclair, "it is only nervousness."

This was a better thing to be sure!

"Visitors!" said Mary pointing to a carriage that was rolling up to the hall door.

"Put it in, Miss Frampton, it is a good feature," said Mr. Sinclair who was looking over her attempt.

"If you would be so very kind," said she softly. "I don't know at all how to draw a carriage."

"Send for them out here," said Eustace.

"Don't go in; it is such a bore!"

"Why it might be as well," said Mary. "I suppose they are some people we are intimate with."

"I should think so, because they are so very early," said Mr. Heywood, looking up innocently from the remains of his snail.

He was mistaken. Mary did not know much of Mrs. Manley and her daughters, who now advanced under the trees towards the party.

They did not appear with the most smiling countenances, for the group was not exactly to their taste. First, Constance was there, whom they had neglected; next they hated the Framptons who would not visit them, and again it was not pleasant to come into a party of gentlemen, who were engaged attending upon other young ladies. Fortunately for their nerves they did not know that the gentlemen were officers, except Mr. Sinclair, who was in undress uniform with his cap very much over one eye, which gave him rather an insolent aspect, and who was engaged in putting their car-

riage into Miss Sophia's sketch. It was like her to have such a person leaning over her chair and flirting so shamefully. But worse than that was the behaviour of Constance, who seated a little apart, was reading out of the same book with Captain Bohun, and actually laughing at some passages he was pointing out to her. They should not wonder if it was Don Juan ; and the next party to whom they mentioned it, improving on their idea, declared that Constance had been seen reading Don Juan with a young man, and enjoying it very much.

“ Well, so you have been very gay,” said Mrs. Manley.

“ I wished you could have joined us,” said Mary.

“ Thank you, we only returned from our little tour last night ; found your two invitations waiting us. How are you now, Constance my dear ?”

“ Very well thank you, ma'am.”

“She hasn’t been so naughty since,—drowning herself, you know,” said Mary.

Here Mr. Heywood burst into a little shrill laugh, and then stopped suddenly; which very much startled the Manleys.

“Drowning herself! that is so good;” said he, addressing Mary.

“Such an idea!” added Eustace.

The Manleys who had helped the report looked rather silly; and after a few unimportant remarks, rose to go, which put Eustace to the great exertion of walking with them as far as their carriage.

Mr. Heywood, after staring after them for five minutes, told Constance that he was sure those horrid women were blues, and he should not wonder knew Latin.

“Oh! that’s nothing,” said Constance; “I know Hebrew.”

Mr. Heywood recoiled a few paces at this announcement; perhaps he thought she might set him on fire, as she undoubtedly would the Thames at some future period of her existence.

The morning passed, the guests took **their** leave; and Constance was left with **her** cousin in the deserted drawing-room to talk over the last night's gaiety.

"I hope," said Mary, "you felt flattered that you retained Captain Bohun in the conservatory all the evening. He does not often go to balls, I know, but when he does he always dances.

"Nonsense," said Constance, turning away her head.

"I hope," said Mary, half in jest, yet with something of earnest in her manner, "you don't mean to break his heart. Miss **Hernshaw** nearly accomplished that, you know, and it would not be fair."

"His heart, a man's heart!" exclaimed Constance turning quickly round; "my dear Mary, let us keep to facts; don't indulge your imagination in such matters."

Yes; although circumstances had schooled her, and time had blunted the sharpness of her disappointment, there remained half hidden in her breast a spirit of distrust not

so much of others as of herself. She could never inspire a lasting attachment ! She might please and be pleased ; but the love which she once thought real, and which alone she could accept, it was not in her power to excite or retain ! And yet during the few days that she remained at Hillsted, there was a watchful, active respect in Captain Bohun's manner towards her whenever they met, that prevented her feeling entirely at ease. Women who have once been duped are wonderfully quick-sighted ; and therefore when they are inclined to become coquettes, are incredibly mischievous ; but Constance, true to her nature, avoided giving encouragement to a partiality which she thought she could never return, and therefore contrived to see very little of him during the short remainder of her visit.

CHAPTER VIII.

I will not say you are welcome—

That is the common speech of common friends ;—

I am glad I have thee here.

THE LOVER'S MELANCHOLY.

“ It is very warm to-day papa,” said Constance pausing in her reading ; “ shall we go under the trees and finish ?”

“ With all my heart, my dear : but do not go on reading ; the air, and the scent of all these flowers will very well supply the place of any other excitement.”

“ Papa, can you see that bed of flowers ?”

“ That red cluster which I guess to be peonies—very plainly.”

“ Can you see me, papa ?”

“Something of your white dress, and the brown outline of your hair.”

“My hair has become darker lately,” said Constance.

“That is well.”

“Do you prefer dark hair?”

“My dear, I hardly knew what I was saying ; but I have a prejudice in favour of it, your mamma had very dark hair. By the bye, when does she come back from Hillsted?”

“At five o'clock ; did she not tell you?”

“She came to my study, but I had old Barlow with me.”

“Making a noise about the enclosure ? I heard him shouting. Mary has a good deal to ask mamma about the infant school. How much active good she does at Hillsted ; and nobody knows it ! I don't suppose she spends half her allowance upon herself.”

“True ; she is thoroughly generous, in many ways, besides the giving away of

money. What carriage is that dashing up the lane ?”

“ It has four horses ; a plain proof that we have no interest in it. Is it my fancy, papa, that since we have been obliged to retrench, even so little, our neighbours have been less friendly than before ?”

“ Not your fancy, my dear child ; it is most likely to be the case. In a commercial country like this, with the exception of the first nobility, people are measured precisely by the amount of money they may be able to expend yearly. Birth, as far as I have been able to observe, is estimated only when the paternal acres have descended with the paternal name, for they establish the descent more clearly in the eyes of an Englishman, than the most elaborate tree in Herald's College.”

“ Well, papa,” said Constance, as she led him about the garden pausing by the flower beds to gather a rosebud or a spray of honeysuckle, “ this is the prettiest garden in the village ; don't you think so ?”

“ Except Mrs. Manley's, my dear ; and I think, Mrs. Dyce's—”

“ I make no exceptions,” said Constance ;
“ only smell this moss rose.”

“ Oh ! there is no doubt in the world that our flowers are sweeter than their's,” said her father smiling.

“ The proper real violets are all over,” she said ; “ but there are some Russian ones close to the steps of the garden door. We will go there and find some.”

She knelt down by the violet bed, and gave them one by one to her father as he stood beside her.

“ Well, I should call these real violets,” said he, as he held out his hand for them.

“ No, in the first place they are not nearly so beautiful a blue,” said Constance.

“ If my memory serves me, my dear, that is mere prejudice on your part. But—is there not some one on the steps ?

Constance turned her head, and saw

Lord Bevis standing in the doorway, as if uncertain whether to advance or not.

“Surely you have not forgotten me,” he said as he came down the steps.

“Lord Bevis !” exclaimed Mr. D'Oyley holding out both his hands, “I cannot say I am glad to see you, the phrase hardly fits me now ; but it is indeed a pleasure to me to hear your voice again !”

Lord Bevis said nothing : it was not his custom when he was much affected. Constance ran into the house, and her father was left alone with his friend.

“Well, I do think,” said she as she leaned against the drawing-room window, “I do think he is paying a pretty long visit. That carriage was his then, and it is gone away. I wonder if he means to come and live here. He is not going to walk with papa I can tell him though, instead of me, after to-day ; I'll let him have this one afternoon. I wonder how much he loved poor, poor Isabel ? He looks very pale, perhaps he is in a consumption !”

Having thus dispatched Lord Bevis, she resumed her work, and sat listening for her mother's return.

Mrs. D'Oyley was quite as much surprised as Constance wished her to be, when she heard that Lord Bevis was sitting under the elm-trees on the grass, with her husband. However as it was five o'clock, and dinner was ready, she suggested that Constance should just step out to her father, by way of reminding him of the hour.

"You will do very wisely," she heard her father say, in reply to some remark of Lord Bevis.

"I have no choice," returned Lord Bevis earnestly. "I can no longer live alone. I have peopled my solitude."

"And you are come to tell us that dinner is ready," said Mr. D'Oyley as Constance came up.

Lord Bevis turned his dark wild eyes upon her, rose, and held out his hand.

"I think," he said, "Miss D'Oyley, I have some claim to be considered an

old acquaintance of yours. I have not forgotten our last and only meeting."

Neither had Constance ; but she said nothing ; she walked on beside her father with her eyes bent on the ground, wondering whether he had forgiven Isabel, and whether he was going to dine with them ; a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous that was not uncommon in the progress of her thoughts.

At dinner Mr. D'Oyley informed his wife that Lord Bevis had consented to pass a few days with them ; Mrs. D'Oyley said some kind and appropriate things in return, and then the conversation dropped. Constance sat perfectly mute, looking in a species of wonder at Lord Bevis, whenever he was not looking at her, which was very seldom.

After tea, things went on better. Mr. D'Oyley asked Constance to give him some music, and she sang some ballads in an exquisite style. Lord Bevis drew near and

round in her fresh gay manner
if he liked pathetic ballads like
had sung; or such a merry tune
and she began singing a lively
He could not tell which to
she sang another Tyrolienne,
said was prettier, and in which
agreed.

Then Mrs. D'Oyley looking
from her work, told Constan
Lord Bevis a portfolio of which
which was open on a stand in the

He admired them very much
her if she drew. She said not
wished to know if those prints
her wish to be an artist, and
No. She believed those very

old acquaintance of yours. I have not forgotten our last and only meeting."

Neither had Constance ; but she said nothing ; she walked on beside her father with her eyes bent on the ground, wondering whether he had forgiven Isabel, and whether he was going to dine with them ; a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous that was not uncommon in the progress of her thoughts.

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After tea, things went on better. Mr. D'Oyley asked Constance to give him some music, and she sang some ballads in an exquisite style. Lord Bevis drew near and

had seen, but which raised his spirits and disposed him to talk on, if it was only for the sake of seeing what new turn she would give to the discourse.

“ Very pleasant to you,” he said ; “ but do you know that I have a little feeling of self-reproach, in finding that you have shewn so much more wisdom and fortitude than myself !”

“ Why then, we will change the subject,” said Constance. “ Do you draw ?”

“ Yes, I draw,” he replied, “ but painting would have interfered with all my habits. I could not paint, you know, by lamplight.”

“ Oh ! but you are going to leave off all those habits, are you not ?”

“ Why, who told you, I wonder ?” said Lord Bevis smiling.

“ I heard papa say you were going to do very wisely ; now he could not think it very wise,”—she stopped and laughed.

“ Pray go on,” said Lord Bevis.

“Very wise to lead the life of an owl,” said she, looking down.

Lord Bevis seemed very much amused by this similitude.

“I do not know how the daylight will agree with me yet,” he said ; but I do mean to go to town in a day or two, and take my seat in the house, and I am not without hope that your father will accompany me, for a short time.”

“I don't quite know whether I can spare him,” said Constance ; “but I'll see about it.”

“The fact is, I can live upon the past no longer,” said Lord Bevis.

“Who can ?” asked Constance eagerly, “not the young who have the uncertain future before them ; not the old, who stand upon the brink of another world.”

Lord Bevis looked earnestly at her as if he wished her to go on speaking ; but finding that she did not, he busied himself

in helping her to restore the prints to their places ; and shortly after the bell rang for prayers.

Constance wished him good night, and as she crossed the hall to go up stairs, she saw his beautiful horse standing at the hall steps, waiting for him to take his accustomed nocturnal ride. She looked out into the bright moonlight, and half envied him the will and the opportunity to enjoy the delicious stillness of the summer night.

It was indeed a night when all the poetry that can be spent upon skies and stars, fall short of their sublime and tranquil beauty. Constance leaned from her open casement, and thought it was a luxury only to feel the presence of the glorious moonlight, and the fresh scent of the earth and flowers beneath the fallen dew.

Her window looked into the road, but at that hour she was so perfectly secure against any passengers in so retired a spot that she still remained at the casement, let-

ting down her long hair which the soft and fitful breeze had scarcely power to stir from its heavy folds.

She had, as she used to say of herself, a habit of thinking, and she fell into a long train of musing, suggested by the coming of Lord Bevis, which involved all the most eventful period of her life.

She was startled from her reverie by the sound of a horse's footsteps, and thinking that Lord Bevis had returned from his ride, she withdrew from the window till he should have passed by. But the light on her table seemed to reveal her figure to the horseman, for he slackened his pace, and exclaimed as he passed under the casement "Good night, Miss D'Oyley—good night." It was not Lord Bevis ; she was not sure, but she thought she recalled the voice of Captain Bohun.

Their village was so completely out of the road to C—— that it could scarcely have been chance which brought him past their house at that hour ; and strange to

say, this trifling incident gave Captain Bohun more of interest in her eyes than the attention he had paid her when they were together. His good night rang in his ears until morning.

CHAPTER. IX.

BERT.—Is there no hope left me ?

CAM.—Nor to myself, but is a neighbour to
Impossibility.

BERT.—And is this your
Determinate sentence ?

CAM.— Not to be revoked.

THE MAID OF HONOUR.

For two or three days, Constance bore very well this singular addition to their party. It was something to think and talk of, that the man who had excited the curiosity of the whole neighbourhood, should be staying under their very roof. But when she found that he engrossed very much of her father's time and society, when he volunteered to write her father's letters, and

read her father's books, and when his offers were willingly accepted, Constance began to think things were going a little too far.

"I shall be obliged to call on you again for your help when I lose Lord Bevis," said Mr. D'Oyley one morning, "but till then, it seems that I shall give you a holiday,

"I don't want a holiday," said Constance darting a look at Lord Bevis, which, as he was searching for some papers at the moment, passed very harmlessly over his head. "I am not fond of being idle."

"And I am not afraid of your being idle, my dear," said her papa cheerfully, as he took the arm of Lord Bevis, and went into his study.

It was too bad, and her mamma would not pity her, she knew; she hurried off into the long filbert walk at the end of the garden, and there amused herself by crying heartily.

"What, Constance in tears!" said a low soft voice close to her ear. She turned and

found herself in the arms of her cousin Mary ; and Eustace and Captain Bohun at a little distance, making their way towards her.

Constance hastily dried her eyes, and began to attack Eustace who joined her first.

“You disagreeable creature !” said she turning sharply round, “always coming when I am not fit to be seen. Oh ! how do you do, Captain Bohun ?”

“But you are really the most fortunate girl,” said Mary ; crying does not make you look ugly. I think it is because you have such black eyelashes.”

“Oh ! let us see the black eyelashes,” said Eustace trying to peep under her bonnet.

Constance turned her back upon him, and began to relate her grievances to Mary. “There he is at this moment,” she concluded, “in papa’s study, talking alone with him ; not content with taking him to

London on Wednesday, which I should not so much mind, if papa's horrid curate did not preach on Sunday. Though it seems very absurd before strangers," said she, dashing away the remains of her tears.

"Don't be ashamed because he is here, my dear," said Mary laughing and looking at Captain Bohun. "I rather think he would be quite as much vexed that anybody but himself should do anything for his father, though he might possibly take a different method of showing it."

Eustace laughed heartily; it was such an idea! He knew he should be much obliged to any one who would save him the trouble of waiting on his governor; that was all he knew about it. He then said that he would call again for his sister as he had another visit to pay a little farther on, and then he should say good-bye to Constance.

"Oh! true, you go away to-morrow,"

said she. "I hope you don't expect a very pathetic farewell; because I have quite done crying, and I am afraid I can't begin again, even for you.

As soon as Eustace was gone, Mary recollected that she wished to speak to her aunt about the new schoolmistress; if Constance would wait for her in the filbert walk, she would be back in a few minutes. Constance felt just a little embarrassed at being left alone with Captain Bohun. She sat down on a low seat to wait for her cousin's return. He stood beside her in silence, striking about the pebbles on the walk with his stick.

At last he said in rather a constrained manner, "I had hoped you would not consider me quite as a stranger."

Constance did not recollect at the moment that she had used the word. "No," she said, "she could not if she would, consider him as a stranger, when such singular events had happened which were

He said that it was more wisely for others than for then there was another pathing more of constraint on

“We are both thinking person,” said Constance looking

He started, and then an effort if she had ever heard of—

“Of Mrs. Forde,” said Constance quite steadily; “no, I know Mrs. Forde. Mrs. Hernshaw is not a communicative person and indeed of her I see nothing

“I have,” said he, looking at Constance as he spoke. “You have been at Paris.”

“So I heard at first”

headlong into every extravagance practised in that dissipated capital. She rouges and flirts ; while he—" Captain Bohun stopped and said in a calm voice, " we have neither of us anything to regret in those past events which are common to us both."

" So I thought and felt the first hour I heard of—" Her voice faltered a little.

Captain Bohun muttered something to himself about a brave spirit, and Constance wished sincerely that Mary would come back to them.

But matters were come to a crisis. Captain Bohun seized the opportunity to explain himself. He did not indeed venture to press for a decided answer ; he knew that the past must still hold some influence over her mind. " I only ask," he said, " to retain some place in your memory until I can return and endeavour to win your regard. One moment—all that I can dream of happiness in life is centered in your reply : will you deny me the hope that I may in some degree contribute to yours ?"

Constance burst into tears, he seemed so terribly in earnest ; but that appeared to encourage him, for he threw himself at her feet.

She was the last person to sustain such a scene with dignity ; altogether agitated and frightened, turning red and pale, blushing and trembling, she begged him to rise, and never to think of her any more.

“ I don't believe,” said she trying to speak with composure, “ that I shall ever love again ; and it is very well, because nobody will... No—I know what you mean to say—but after a time I think every one would be tired—as he was—because I have no beauty. I said so then—”

He entreated her to let time prove that his passion could undergo no change. He had loved her when it would have been dishonourable to make any advances ; he implored her now that other impediments were removed, not to let her own heart present an obstacle to his success.

“ No !” she said, “ when you see :

One much more beautiful—oh ! even the memory of Isabel will rise up between me and your heart.”

He endeavoured to assure her of the unchangeable nature of his feelings ; but she interrupted him.

“ You do not know,” said she, “ how very needful I am to my father, or how very willing he would be to resign my cares if he thought it would make me happier ; but I look on my post as a task from Heaven, and nothing could ever tempt me to leave it unfulfilled.”

In vain he implored her to enter into some engagement, however indefinite ; to grant him some assurance that he was not indifferent to her.

She said her mother's health rendered her incapable of supplying her place with her father, and the future was so uncertain, even as regarded his recovery, that she would never suffer any one to possess a claim upon her. She said this with many tears, and certainly did not raise any objec-

tions to himself ; but she was quite resolute, and held out her hand to part.

It was no time for words ; indeed he knew of none that he could oppose to so sacred a resolve. He drew off her glove—raised her hand to his lips—passed quickly through the wicket at the end of the walk, and was gone. He had taken her glove with him.

“ Where is Captain Bohun ? ” asked Mary as she entered the walk, and found Constance sitting just where she had left her, pulling the leaves from one of the hazel boughs.

“ Gone,” said Constance quietly ; “ you were such a long time.”

“ He said he was in a hurry when he fell in with us on the road,” said Mary. “ Aunt D'Oyley wants to know where you keep those little books for the school.”

“ I will go in and look for them,” said Constance ; “ they are in one of the drawers in papa's study.”

She found the books for her cousin ; and

when Eustace returned, to drive Mary home and pay his adieux, her farewell was so dispirited, that he had some reason to flatter himself upon her civil and reluctant leave-taking. He could not be supposed to guess that she was thinking of something else.

CHAPTER X.

No te aconsejo yo, ni digo cosa
Para que debas tú por ella darme
Respuesta tan aceda, y tan odiosa.

GARCILASO DE LA VEGA.

MR. AYLIFFE, the curate, was thought by a great many ladies in the village to be very handsome ; that is, he had a light complexion with a large nose, and remarkably small eyes. He was certainly energetic in the discharge of his duties ; cuffing the charity children of either sex as opportunity offered, and rendering himself so thoroughly unpopular among the lower class that on one occasion he narrowly escaped the undignified process of a ducking.

He was not deficient in a certain sort of

rough talent, which was not controlled by any possible sympathy for the nerves or feelings of others ; and although singularly devoid of all attractive qualities, yet no one could deny that he was influenced by a sincere and disinterested wish to serve the cause of true religion, that is, the particular party to which he belonged ; for he possessed a sufficient fortune, and had large expectations ; so that no feeling of self-interest had induced him to devote himself to the ministry.

Humanely speaking, (as if human beings were ever likely to speak in any other fashion ;) he was utterly unfit to serve any possible cause, from the harsh and unsympathising nature of his disposition. It is not easy to lead people—it is hard to drive them ; but they won't be pelted to Heaven.

Constance disliked him very cordially ; but Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley had some reason to think, between themselves, that the dislike was by no means reciprocal. Mr. D'Oyley thought that he came, while Con-

stance read to him, a great deal oftener than was necessary, to complain of the schoolmistress, or to grumble at the beadle, or to wonder what could possibly make the children sing so flat last Sunday. Mr. D'Oyley thought that he dropped in at tea time, and sat watching Constance working, or listening to her music more perseveringly than he would have done, if he was driven out simply from a distaste to his solitary home. There were plenty of gayer and richer families where he would have been made very welcome. But Constance bestowed on him no measured portion of her dislike. She disliked his voice, and his small eyes, and his disagreeable questioning style of conversation, and his hard preaching, and his long visits, and his dictatorial ways; and worst of all, his horrid habit of taking snuff. A young man and take snuff! Whenever her mamma endeavoured to tone down the asperity of her censure, to say that he was not so harsh, and not so self-sufficient as Con-

stance declared he was, she felt that there at least she had a stronghold, an unanswerable argument, "You can't say, mamma, you cannot say he does not take snuff."

It certainly was a pity that he took such a fancy to her; but he admired her devotion to her parents, and the uniform cheerfulness with which she fulfilled her office; she never repined about it. She would decline a pic-nic with her cousin, or a party at Hillsted or any thing she might be supposed to enjoy, by saying in a frank easy way that she was engaged to walk out with her papa, or that she had half a dozen letters to write for him by the post. She never talked of her poor father needing her care, or let any one imagine that it was not just as pleasant to attend on him, as to seek amusement elsewhere. When the village ladies told her, with that cheap sympathy which it is so easy to bestow, that she really was doing too much for her health, she replied on the contrary, it was doing so much that had established her health.

Mr. Ayliffe heard her, and he was delighted. It was a convenient constitution for a wife to possess, she would certainly be a treasure. Beside he had never forgotten her saving the little boy. Persons of his disposition are marvellously apt to judge of others by a single action : a very bad plan by the bye. He took it for granted that Constance had courage—she had a great deal ; but the act on which he founded his opinion was the result of an impulse which might have occurred to a timid woman, and which might never occur again. And by a slight tendency to one-sidedness, which is not very uncommon in the decisions of the more worthy gender, he made up his mind that she would render him happy, without ever considering that he was the last person in the world who was calculated to make her such. But as Mr. Ayliffe was not a person to make much display of such feelings as he might possess, the ladies of the village were all unconscious of his *penchant*, and each believed herself destined

to carry off the prize. Among the ladies his sway was unbounded. The dear officers were not more prized by Miss Meredith, than Mr. Ayliffe was by all the spinsters in the parish. Indeed I am not sure whether a clergyman is not rather more of a black swan than an officer; for nothing can equal his importance in a serious neighbourhood; and certainly his costume is a good deal more imposing.

One day, the Dyces had managed to secure Mr. Ayliffe to drink tea with them. This was rather difficult, because when Mr. D'Oyley was at home, he generally contrived to drop in about tea time at the rectory. But Mr. D'Oyley not being expected from London till late that very evening, he suffered himself to be persuaded for once. Then Miss Dyce recollected that Constance had been rather neglected for some time past, and as she agreed with her sister in thinking her less likely to rival them than any other person in the village, they walk-

ed down to the rectory to ask her to join their party. They were not a little surprised to find Constance in the garden, and Mr. Ayliffe by her side, employed in nailing a jessamine against the wall. This was an employment so very much beneath his general dignity of deportment, that the sisters did not feel quite so comfortable and safe about Constance as when they left their own house.

“ Very odd ! Louisa,” said Miss Dyce.

“ The most singular thing I ever saw !” returned Louisa, as they entered the garden.

Mr. Ayliffe dropped the hammer as soon as he perceived the visitors ; Constance ordered him to pick it up, and came forward to meet them with a pretty good grace considering all things ; asked after Mrs. Dyce, and hoped they were not tired with their walk.

They replied very graciously, and begged for the pleasure of her company at tea.

But Constance would not come: she was much obliged, but her mamma would be left alone.

“ I knew,” said Miss Dyce, “ that papa was always an obstacle; but I did not expect mamma to be brought in as an argument. Could not she come too ?”

No. Constance was sure she could not, she would be fancying every moment that her papa was come back.

“ I know we have behaved shockingly,” said Miss Louisa, “ in not asking you before : but we have been so engaged : I am afraid that is the reason you will not come.”

This was said in jest, but Constance wondered why people did any thing which they knew to be shocking, and why the telling you that they had offered you a slight, thereby seeming to say that the slight was intentional, should be considered as a sufficient atonement.

However she said, with great truth, that she had given the true reason to Miss Dyce in the first instance ; but she hoped

that at some future time she should feel herself at liberty to come and see them.

"Will you not help us to persuade Miss D'Oyley?" said Miss Dyce to Mr Ayliffe.

"No;" he said, "he should be sorry to persuade anybody to act against their sense of duty."

"This has nothing to do with duty," said Constance looking very cross; "it is my pleasure, as it happens."

Miss Dyce felt sure that Mr. Ayliffe would never bear being spoken to in that manner, and she became more pressing in her invitation to Constance.

Meanwhile Miss Louisa was asking Mr. Ayliffe's opinion of the ribbon that was to be put on the school-children's bonnets.

"Don't you think pink ribbons would look cheerful?"

Mr. Ayliffe stepped back a pace or two, and then said, that he could never consent to such a proposal. "Our object," he reasoned, "should be to suppress vanity,

not to encourage it. I should be sorry to see any gay colours in our school."

"White, then?" suggested Miss Dyce.

No, he did not approve of white, it was unsuited to the condition of poor children.

"Green perhaps might do—"

"Green is no better than pink," returned Mr. Ayliffe.

"There is a snail on that rose-tree near you," cried Constance; "take it off, and throw it into the high grass."

Mr. Ayliffe obeyed in silence, and turned to reply to Miss Dyce who suggested purple as an amendment.

"It must be a very dark purple then," said he, "but I should like brown better."

Of course the Miss Dyces exclaimed in favour of brown, it would look so neat, and match the children's frocks besides.

"Don't you think so, Miss D'Oyley?" asked Mr. Ayliffe.

"No," said Constance; "you and I,

Mr. Ayliffe, never think alike upon any subject."

Mr. Ayliffe looked so hurt when she made this remark, that she could have wished it unsaid; but he held the odious snuff-box in his hand, and she did not know how to be sorry that she had pained him.

She was very glad that she had not been persuaded to go to the Dyces that night, for her father came home earlier than she expected, and she had so many things to ask and to hear. Lord Bevis had insisted on his seeing the most celebrated oculist of the day, but he only confirmed the opinion of his good friend Mr. Martyn, that some time must elapse before he could be justified in attempting an operation. He had wished for no farther opinion himself; but he could not disappoint the anxious kindness of his friend Lord Bevis. He had also been most kind in his inquiries respecting the future prospects of his sons, promising his influence whenever it could

exercised to their advantage. With reference to Edgar, Mr. D'Oyley said, that of course at his age his plans must be in the most complete uncertainty ; it was very probable that Lord Bevis might be as able as he was willing to assist him there; and to Harry he said he had another plan, of which Lord Bevis knew nothing. He had received an offer through Mr. Hilton of a clerkship or partnership in a merchant's house, which would involve his son's residing for some time in Sweden, and of which the purchase money, as a favour promised by Mr. Hilton, might be paid by instalments. Mr. D'Oyley thought the sort of life would suit Harry very well, and it was distressing to him, and seemed contrary to his principles, to suffer his son to enter the Church from any motive except a sincere desire to devote himself to the ministry. But as this would involve still farther retrenchment in their means, he wished to mention it to his wife and daughter, before closing with the proposal.

It is needless to say with what sincere pleasure they both heard of this proposal. Constance indeed wished that she had a fortune and could pay the partnership at once ; but as that could not be had for the wishing, she was glad to embrace the means offered for procuring the money. They were all earnestly engaged talking over the matter, when the accustomed knock at the door gave them notice that Mr. Ayliffe was at hand.

“ I declare ! ” exclaimed Constance, “ I did think we were safe for this evening. Would not anybody else have had the discretion to keep away ? And we are going to prayers in two minutes and a half.”

“ He is so anxious to see papa after his journey,” said Mrs. D'Oyley with an arch smile at Constance.

Mr. Ayliffe walked in, paid his compliments to Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley, made three complaints of three several children, expressed in technical terms his regret

that the work went on so slowly. To which Mr. D'Oyley replied by reminding him of Milton's famous line :

Those also serve who only stand and wait.

Mr. Ayliffe then sat down by Constance, remarking, as he did so, that he had never seen her looking better.

"So I should think ; I have neither altered for better nor worse, since you have been acquainted with me," returned Constance.

"You have not been to the schools lately, I think?" said Mr. Ayliffe.

"Hardly at all since you have been here," said Constance ; "because I am not so much wanted."

Mr. Ayliffe said that people should never be weary of well-doing ; and Constance just paused a moment to think whether it would be worth while to point out to him, that to offer your services where they are not wanted, is no particular test of your desire for well-doing. But she remembered that

his ideas were remarkably obtuse on all those topics, so she walked to the piano and employed herself in shutting it up, and putting her music in order, as a slight hint to the curate, if he chose to take it, that they were about to retire for the night. While she was doing this, she heard him ask Mr. D'Oyley if he might speak a few words to him in his study, and her father said, "Yes, certainly," and left the room with him.

He came back again after an interval of about half an hour, and then told Constance that he had received a proposal for her from Mr. Ayliffe.

Mrs. D'Oyley did not even put on the semblance of surprise. Constance first wondered at the man's impertinence, and then asked her father if she should ring the bell for prayers?

Mr. D'Oyley replied in the affirmative; and after the servants were dismissed, he told Constance that he wished her to consider calmly the advantages of the match,

before she gave a decided answer ; that Mr. Ayliffe was a man of high moral and religious character ; (here Constance made a face, and then told her papa she had made one, as otherwise it would have escaped his observation) that he was a man of good fortune, which where it was well-used, Mr. D'Oyley thought was one argument out of many in his favour ; that he was sincerely and disinterestedly attached to Constance, and that to see her united happily to a deserving man, would remove very much anxiety from his mind.

Constance replied that Mr. Ayliffe was utterly and entirely disagreeable to her, and that he knew it, but that he cared no more for her taste in the matter, provided she pleased him, than a man who buys a horse ; that at any time she would rather subsist by the hardest toil, than become his wife ; and she hoped her father would tell him so, and not allow him to go on teasing and visiting when no earthly power could ever change her mind.

Mr. D'Oyley could not help smiling at her vehemence, but he promised that he would let Mr. Ayliffe know, in rather milder terms, that she declined the honour of his addresses.

Mr. D'Oyley went away quite satisfied after this arrangement, but Mrs. D'Oyley remained behind to discuss the matter with Constance.

“The protection of such a marriage—” she began.

“My dear mamma,” cried Constance, “I never could comprehend how any woman with health and sense can want protection. I don't wish to be vain, but I am very glad, now disinterestedly, when I meet any young man who possesses half my knowledge and discernment; and when I grow old I suppose things will be in the same proportion. I am therefore as capable of transacting business as they are; and the only way in which women of my small means can be cheated is by the butcher and the grocer, and that only in the matter of a

few pence. It is only in barbarous countries that women can be said to want protection."

"There is another thing, my dear, I wish you to consider," said Mrs. D'Oyley; "without fortune, it is unusual for women in the present day to marry at all; and though you have had opportunities, owing perhaps to an unusually pleasing exterior, (here Constance laughed, and shook back her curls,) yet it is not to be supposed that they should often be repeated; and though now the name of old maid is not very formidable to you, yet when you come to the time of life in which you may incur it, you will perhaps regret that you did not take steps to avoid the world's dread laugh."

"Is not that supposing, my dear mamma, that I shall grow sillier instead of wiser as I grow older?" said Constance; "No, I mean to set the world a good many examples, and among them, that of not concerning myself when it talks nonsense."

"And your objection to Mr. Ayliffe is so

trifling," said Mrs. D'Oyley, "merely because he takes snuff, I do believe."

"It is at least an objection that nothing can remove," said Constance; "as long as the man has a nose he will go on taking snuff: that is a habit which is never left off."

"And he is generally so much admired by the ladies here," said Mrs. D'Oyley.

"So is every man who wears a surplice," replied Constance; "however I am glad they do admire him. I never thought much of their taste, and I hope some of them will marry him."

"One at a time, my dear," said Mrs. D'Oyley smiling. "I fear it is in vain to say anything for poor Mr. Ayliffe."

"Quite, my dear mamma, do not let us even pay him the compliment of sitting up late to talk him over."

"Well then, good night my child," said Mrs. D'Oyley: "in such a case as the present, you must be the only judge of your own happiness."

“No !” said Constance as she found herself alone in her room, “if I rejected Captain Bohun for the sake of remaining with my parents, I should hardly break my resolve for the sake of this hard-headed and cold-hearted despot.”

CHAPTER XI.

Reach a loftier love ; be lured by the comeliness of mind ; gentle, kind, and calm ; or lustrous in the livery of knowledge.—PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

“ AND so Constance,” said her cousin Mary, as she was sitting with her a few days after the preceding events, “ you are to mark your handkerchief with a coronet at last.”

“ Why, Mary,” said Constance, looking up in great surprise from the pocket-handkerchief she was very quietly hemming, “ where did you pick up that piece of gossip ?”

“ You deny it then ?”

“ Entirely ; I suppose you mean Lord

Bevis ; he is the only one wearing a coronet I was ever in company with."

"No less a person ; by the bye, how my friend Captain Bohun used to admire your downright way of talking. No other girl would have brought out the right name under an hour's cross-questioning."

Constance blushed deeply, and was silent.

"There is some talk in the village of Mr. Ayliffe," said Mary ; "but I am sure he never sent all those beautiful flowers, nor those magnificent grapes you had at luncheon."

"Lord Bevis sends them to papa ;" said Constance.

"Is he returned from town yet ?"

"Yes ; he often comes to see papa. There he is walking in the garden with him ; now he will stay to drink tea with us, and so will you, I hope."

"I mean it. My father is gone to a great dinner at Lord Westland's, where the females of our family are not admitted,

and I am free to dispose of myself as I like ; that is, if your Lord will not be incommoded by strangers."

"Not in the least ; when he broke through his seclusion, he seemed to get rid at the same time of all that nervous dislike to strangers which you would suppose his habits had induced in him. The other day Tim came, when he was in the garden with me, and stood asking all sorts of questions about Edgar, and staring fixedly at Lord Bevis all the time ; and to my surprise, instead of going away in disgust, he joined in the conversation and made Tim describe his mode of living at farmer Ridge's."

"Very curious," said Mary ; "but, my dear, the people will never believe he is not your property until he makes himself over to somebody else."

"People never fasten on the right person, I observe ;" said Constance."

"Who is the right person, dear ?" asked Mary.

Constance was saved the trouble of a reply by the entrance of Mr. D'Oyley with Lord Bevis.

"My dear Constance," said her father, "here is a note from Mrs. Parker. Your uncle Thornton is very ill, and wishes to see me immediately."

"How odd;" said Constance, as she glanced over the note.

"What is odd, Miss D'Oyley," asked Lord Bevis; "that people fall sick, or that they should wish for consolation under those circumstances?"

"I don't mean to tell you;" said Constance. "But, papa, I am heartily sorry to hear it; I like uncle Thornton very much when I am away from him. Are you going directly?"

"Directly, my dear. Mrs. Parker has sent her carriage."

"And you will be absent all night?"

"Yes, my dear. I cannot very well return before to-morrow morning."

"Then you will want all sorts of things

to take with you ;” said Constance starting up.

“ Nothing, my dear, that your mamma has not sent down to the carriage already. Good bye to all !”

“ Well, dear papa, I hope you will find my uncle better. Give my love to him, and pray make the people there take care of you.”

“ I shall come upon you, Miss D'Oyley, for all kinds of amusement and instruction this evening ;” said Lord Bevis as soon as Mr. D'Oyley was gone. “ You do not mean, I hope, to turn me out because I am deprived of your father's society.”

“ I was just debating about it,” said Constance. “ Where's my book ?”

“ Oh ! I have brought it in : I don't forget that I left your last book to the mercy of the elements. Does it go into this shelf ? Let me put it away. I don't like your choice at all this time.”

“ Very likely,” said Constance ; “ but you know you ought to vary your reading. I

didn't expect that you would like Pope as well as you like Shakspeare, at least, I hope not."

"Pray set your mind at rest," said Lord Bevis, "I am no great admirer of manual dexterity."

"But Pope had a great knowledge of human nature," said Constance.

"A great knowledge of human infirmity, hadn't he?" said Mary turning round from her embroidery frame.

Lord Bevis turned from the book-shelf and looked earnestly at Mary as she spoke.

"Well, dear," said Constance, "and what is the difference?"

"The difference between a part and the whole," said Mary, "which mathematicians will tell you is something considerable. By the bye, Constance, the needle you gave me for my floss-silk is quite rusty: a plain proof of your industry; thank you, this will do better."

"I would not let you stare so at me if I

was speaking," said Constance to Lord Bevis ; " it would fairly put me out."

" It would take a great deal to do that, Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis, " if you were bent upon speaking your mind."

" That is decidedly a rude speech," said Constance ; " but I suppose you are cross because I have not presented my cousin Mary to you : so now suppose yourselves acquainted."

" It will give me much pleasure to do so," said Lord Bevis ; but though he said so, he did not improve much on the acquaintance. He sat watching her progress at her embroidery for some time in perfect silence ; and then Mrs. D'Oyley came in to tea, and he had a great deal to say to her, in a low tone ; so much that Constance was obliged to summon him to hand Mary a cup of coffee, and then to scold him for requiring to be reminded of his duties.

" Only one gentleman, and three ladies to be waited on !" said Constance. " Tha'

is mamma's cup, if you please. I know it is very hard and fatiguing, but it must be done."

"If we draw near the table some of us," said Mary rising, cup in hand, "we shall lessen his task a little."

"The very thing I should like to increase ;" said Constance laughing.

"My dear Constance," said Mary in a tone so low that she thought Lord Bevis could not hear it, for she had drawn her chair close to her cousin's, and he was quite at the other end of the pembroke-table, "my dear Constance, when you are quite as old as I am, and have lost a little of that pretty bloom, you will feel a certain pride in preventing, rather than enduring, civilities, which are not rendered from the heart."

"I am sure it is a great shame," said Constance, "and shows a thorough want of taste."

"May be so," said Mary smiling ; "but to the end of time, pretty faces will be the

occasion of all these *petits soins*, and people who have not got them, if they can once be convinced of the fact, which is very difficult, will do well to dispense with these attendant courtesies."

"I wonder," said Constance, "if any other women, besides you, Mary, think themselves—not pretty ; because you are a great deal better looking than the Dyces, or the Manleys, or the Brownings and they all think themselves beautiful, and are thought so by their particular friends."

"I never met with any, dear," said Mary ; "but I dare say you could find a parallel case to mine, if you looked for it. But seriously, I never saw a woman who had not been called pretty by somebody or other ; and though she would not take that somebody's word upon any other subject, yet she was sure to take it on that. Now, dear, if we have quite done tea, and I may ring to have it taken away, I shall be able to go on with my work."

"It would be a charity to you to put o

the candles and oblige you to be idle all the evening," said Constance ; " does not your head ache with counting all those crooked stitches ?"

" Not at all," replied Mary. " I assure you it is only finger-work ; I shall be quite able to listen to your singing."

" Well—Lord Bevis and mamma are talking so busily that I suppose I shall not disturb them ;" said Constance going to the piano ; " what kind of a song will you have ?"

The singing brought Lord Bevis to the piano ; and when Constance had finished her song, he asked Mary if she played.

" I play the harp," she said ; " but I have spoiled my finger for the piano. I don't like to hear myself play it."

" Does not your cousin sing very well ?" he asked.

" Beautifully, I think," said Mary. " I hardly know any private performer who can give more effect to an old ballad."

“Are not such ballads much more difficult than more scientific music?” asked Lord Bevis.

“Oh! no, I think that is a mistake,” said Mary. “I know it is often said so; but the one can be acquired and the other cannot. If you don’t sing a ballad easily, you never can sing it at all.”

Now for a woman to give a reply which shows that she discriminates, between black and white for instance, or any on other abstruse topic, is to a good many people a very provoking and disagreeable circumstance. But it did not seem as if Lord Bevis was of this opinion; for he drew his chair close to the piano, and had a good deal of conversation with Mary about music, seeming indeed to prefer asking questions of her, to addressing them to Constance, which perhaps was rather wise; as she made a jest of everything he said; and if you want information, it is no particular satisfaction that the person who does

not give it you, should be possessed of a very good complexion.

So the evening passed quickly, until about ten o'clock, Lord Bevis rose to take leave, and Mary's carriage was heard rolling up to the door.

"And you are going to ride off;" said Constance; "how I long for an Arab horse that would never tire, and a wide common to scamper over."

"Do let me bring you a horse to-morrow," said Lord Bevis. "I can promise you the gentlest creature—"

"Hear him!" exclaimed Constance; "I am very much obliged to you, but you must first put out all the old and young women's eyes in the parish—or else—or else—oh! ask Mary, she knows all the conventional forms of speech. I only wished for an Arab horse, as I might wish for a lotus flower from the Nile, or a diamond from the King of Oude's necklace. I should be quite puzzled and

disappointed if I found my wish suddenly granted."

So shaking hands with Lord Bevis, and helping Mary to put her worsteds in travelling order, she parted with her friends for the night, and sat down to bestow a few thoughts upon uncle Thornton.

CHAPTER XII.

And great store is great care, the rather if it mightily increaseth.

* * * *

Oh! death, what art thou? An husbandman that reapeth always, out of season as in season, with the sickle in his hand, how full of dread, how full of hope, loometh inevitable, death!—PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

CONSTANCE was rather disappointed the next morning when, instead of her father a brisk serving-man stepped up to the door from Mrs. Parker's carriage with a note for Miss D'Oyley. It contained a few lines scrawled by her father, stating that Mr. Thornton was seriously ill, and that he had

expressed so earnest a desire to see Con-
 stance, that Mrs. Parker had at last con-
 sented to send her carriage for her,
 although convinced that the excitement
 would do harm to the dear invalid. Con-
 stance paused to enclose the note to Mary
 with an entreaty that she would if possible
 come over and see her mamma in the
 course of the day for she was very low
 spirited about her uncle Thornton. She
 then, for the second time of her life, stepped
 into her aunt Parker's carriage, and was
 carried in proper time to Fulham.

She was not very well pleased to find
 herself shown into the library where Mrs.
 Parker was awaiting her arrival. That lady
 rose, and whispered to the servant who
 showed her in ; the purport of which whis-
 per was that Mr. Thornton was not to be
 told at present that Miss D'Oyley was come
 —and then welcomed Constance.

“ Ah ! my dear,” she said, “ little did I
 think that when next I saw you it would

be on so melancholy an occasion ; poor uncle Thornton has had a very bad night ; but the Lord orders every thing !”

“ Yes, ma'am,” said Constance ; “ but I am very sorry my uncle has had a bad night.”

“ We ought not to be sorry, my love. We ought to rejoice,” said Mrs. Parker, looking for her pocket-handkerchief ; and there is no doubt that she did rejoice ; but Constance did not follow her example, for she burst into tears.

“ I hope poor brother has some serious thoughts,” said Mrs. Parker wiping slowly first one eye and then the other ; “ but it is untold the trouble I have had to get him to see a minister, because he could not have Mr. Sedley from Leyton ; for he said Mr. Leigh was a papist, and Mr. Malden was a saint ; and all at once he took it into his head to send off for your dear father ; and Mr. D'Oyley has read him the service for the sick, but nothing extempore, which I thought a sad pity.”

"I am sure papa knew best," said Constance.

"Ah! my dear!" said Mrs. Parker with a prolonged shake of the head. "But poor brother was very peevish all yesterday: and said he had not left me any thing in his will—which was nonsense you know my dear."

"Oh! yes, he did not mean it," said Constance.

"Unless indeed, which I should not wonder, he has left everything to Frederick," said Mrs. Parker.

"Perhaps so," replied Constance.

"Though I hardly know what I shall do with John and Anthony, if that is the case," said Mrs. Parker; "they will be ready to kill Frederick."

Constance felt sick to hear this miserable woman commenting on the wealth which perhaps might never be hers with so much eagerness, before her brother was dead; but the conversation was interrupted by the loud ringing of an upstairs bell, and

presently Mr. Thornton's own man came down to know if Miss D'Oyley had not arrived yet.

"Oh true! very well, James, we will come directly. I didn't know, I thought my dear we would have a little luncheon first," said Mrs. Parker in more confusion than the occasion seemed to require. "Dear uncle is very much altered; but you won't be frightened," said Mrs. Parker as they went up stairs; "and if you can say a word about his soul, my love, I am sure you will." Here she softly opened a bedroom door and stole in, saying as she entered in a very subdued tone, "Here is Constance, dear brother, if you are awake and quite ready to see her."

Constance, trembling a little, followed her quickly, and saw Mr. Thornton lying on a sofa at the foot of his bed, wrapped in a dressing-gown. A bright fire burned in the grate, notwithstanding that it was summer time. Mr. D'Oyley was sitting near, and a small table was between them

on which lay a bible, and a good many phials and glasses.

“ Ah ! ha ! ” said Mr Thornton, stretching out his hand to Constance as soon as he perceived her, “ here comes the residuary legate ! I suppose Mistress Parker you won't bring my will into the lunacy courts, if I leave her fifty pounds to buy mourning, will you ? ”

“ Oh ! brother, ” said Mrs. Parker shaking her head, “ it is very awful to hear you talk so ! ”

“ Come then, five-and-twenty ; will you let her have five-and-twenty ? ” said Mr. Thornton still holding Constance fast by the hand, and looking into her face with a dry smile that had some humour, but much kindness in it.

“ Brother ! brother ! ” said Mrs. Parker holding her handkerchief before her face ; “ you don't know what my feelings are ! Besides, you may outlive us all yet. ”

“ That is the way they always talk to a man on his death-bed, ” said Mr. Thornton,

Constance, you refused my fortune you know. Did you ever hear of such a thing, sister Parker?"

"She was very wise, dear brother," said Parker, wiping her eyes; "for riches are a great snare, particularly to those who have never been used to them."

"Well put in!" said Mr. Thornton, "and that is the reason you are not going to be provided with any of my money, you know, I have left you something, child. You are my residuary legatee, if you know what that means."

"It is very good of you, uncle," said Constance, "and shows that you are not angry that I rejected your kindness before. I am very glad you have made me what you wish, and I believe you will be sure it is worth the money."

"I am," said Mr. Thornton; "what a strange creature it is! Why, wealth would have seduced her all that her sex so often pawn their souls for; and here is one woman who does not care a button for it."

At the mention of souls, Mrs. Parker stepped forward, and taking the bible from the little table, told her brother what an anchor that was.

"Well take it away with you, there's a good woman," said Mr. Thornton, "and just leave Constance with me for a few minutes."

Mrs. Parker would not take the bible, but she took the hint ; she crept slowly out of the room and Mr. Thornton bade Constance sit beside him.

"I shall not be alive to-morrow morning," said he ; "don't cry about that, my dear, because I have lived quite long enough. I am very thankful to God that he has left my intellects clear to the very last. I don't know how I should have borne to grow childish, and to know it. I believe I could do a sum in addition as well as I ever did in my life."

"It is a great mercy, uncle," said Constance through her tears.

"In the absence of greater mercies, it is,"

said Mr. Thornton, "I leave no children to mourn for me, Constance; and I have hard work to keep charity with that ravenous old sister of mine, as your father will tell you."

He smiled his old smile as he said this, but he seemed to grow perceptibly weaker.

"Constance," he said after a pause, "don't let them persuade you to come and see me die. Mistress Parker is very fond of death-bed scenes; they are not fit for young people. When you leave me presently, don't come back again. I was present once at a death-bed, and it was a long time before I could look on death as it is: a very welcome rest from grief and sin."

Constance tried to say something, but in vain.

"For all that," said he, "I should like you to go to my funeral. Set the fashion, will you it is a very good one.

"I will uncle, if papa—," she had not voice to complete her sentence.

Mr. D'Oyley confirmed her promise.

"Only, child," said Mr. Thornton, "don't go with Mistress Parker, that might be unpleasant ;" here he laughed feebly, " for I cannot persuade the old lady that she is not to have all my property."

Then Mr. Thornton kissed her with much affection, and she was led by her father from the room, weeping bitterly.

Mrs. Parker tried several means of comforting Constance, which no doubt she had found effectual at some period or other of her life, but which did not seem to answer in the present instance. First she said we must all die ; which remark not having the charm of novelty, did not serve to make Constance at all more cheerful ; then she reminded her that her dear father must go some day just like her poor uncle. As Constance cried rather more upon this assertion, Mrs. Parker seemed puzzled, and took up her knitting, which she plied in silence, interrupting herself from time to time, by wiping her eyes, and uttering very low and prolonged groans ; at last she said to Con-

ce that she would go and see poor
e by and bye, and when she found that
stance persisted in her refusal to see
uncle any more, she was extremely
isted; she thought it was throwing away
at practical lesson.

er father came down to dinner, and
that Mr. Thornton had been dozing a
part of the afternoon. While they
sitting after dinner, a message came
Mr. D'Oyley to summon him to the
room, then another to Mrs. Parker.
tried hard to persuade Constance to
with her, but in vain.

Constance sat alone in the drawing-
till quite late; a maid servant brought
andles, and she told Constance that
Thornton was as bad as could be, and
t know nobody. At last when she
quite sick with waiting, and listening
otsteps, her papa came down and told
at all was over.

CHAPTER XIII.

How now ? what's this ? More drops to the ocean ?
Whose body's this ?

THE MAD LOVER.

Such an uncle never
Was read of in a story.

THE CITY MADAM.

MR. D'OYLEY was a person likely to hold sacred a promise, though it had been made to soothe the wayward fancies of a sick man. He was himself invited to the funeral, and he arranged that Constance should accompany him to Leyton, and that they should take up their abode at the village inn. So they travelled down the day before that appointed for the funeral ; and were supplied with comfortable, though certainly not splendid accommodation at the Leyton

Arms. As it happened to be very wet weather, they were not able to see any of the country, which the neat landlady boasted of as the most beautiful in the world. Mr. D'Oyley was to go to the house and join the procession from thence : and he arranged that the landlady should send Constance in a fly to the church, and fetch her back after the ceremony.

The next morning was very wet ; one of those pouring days when the stormy torrents of rain follow each other without intermission from a dark leaden sky ; when, though the autumn is scarcely set in, the atmosphere surcharged with damp, chills like a wet wintry day. Constance, wishing to enter the church unobserved, ordered the fly half an hour before the time appointed for the funeral. She was surprised to find already several carriages standing at the entrance to the church-yard ; and when she entered the small village church, it was nearly full of people. She hurried into the pew which the landlady

recommended her to occupy, and looked round upon the strange faces collected to witness the pageant got up for their entertainment. The galleries were filled with poor people gazing vacantly down, or rustling up from their seats and looking out of the windows to see if the procession was not beginning to leave the great house. Constance gazed from face to face with a sickening anxiety to see if there was not one among the crowd which bore but the shadow of regret for the man who had been most largely their benefactor for long years past. The curtains were drawn before the windows, and this, added to the deep gloom without, cast the building into twilight; and the shadows of the carved figures on the tombs fell long and sickly over the damp walls.

The families who occupied the pews, had all put on deep mourning for the occasion, and increased the gloom of the spectacle; and nothing was heard but the sweeping of the showers against the win-

dows and the occasional stir of the impatient throng in the galleries.

Constance felt the hot flush rise to her brow, and the thick mist gather in her eyes as she waited, not the less anxiously that she had never seen a funeral before ; she knew nothing of the ceremonies except as she had read them in the prayer-book ; but there are few things which do not impress you differently in the reading and the seeing. She waited, cold and trembling, for about an hour, and then a general bustle in the galleries together with the entrance of two men who set the trestles in the centre aisle, and then retired, gave notice that the procession was at the door. The clergyman entered at the same moment, and being attired by the clerk in the aisle, he opened his book and walked forwards, reciting as he went the sublime opening of the burial service. He was an elderly man of imposing appearance, and having known Mr. Thornton very well in life, there was a something in his tone

which added very much to the effect of the words. His voice died away as he passed out of the portal to meet the new tenant of the grave, and came back again distinctly as he returned with the corpse which was being borne into the aisle.

Constance forced herself to look at the coffin, as it was placed on the trestles with the black plumes waving dark and high above it ; and then at the mourners, who with their black silk scarfs and bands, were now entering a large pew near her. Mr. Frederick Parker did not attempt to wear any show of regret on his rough, dark countenance, but sat gazing vacantly forward, wishing it was all over.

As the clergyman concluded the magnificent proem to the service, the organ, as if in echo of his words, struck into the divine air, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The performance was accurate, nothing more, but the glorious notes fell quivering on her heart as she listened ; as the inspired sounds died away, the service

proceeded. The coffin was lowered into the vault, the earth was showered on the lid, the mourners closed round, and the ceremony was ended.

Constance hurried through the rain to her fly, and returned to the inn. She did not expect her father from Leyton for some time, so she ordered a fire, for it was wretchedly cold and dreary, and sat down to wait for him. The landlady kindly passed the time in condoling with her; it is true that her aphorisms were scarcely newer or more enlivening than those of Mrs. Parker, but they seemed to come from the heart, and they were much more endurable.

At last Mr. D'Oyley came in. He was as cold as Constance expected, for he had been sitting for some time at Leyton in a room without a fire; but she thought he looked either distressed or worried very much about something.

He asked her how she had managed in

“ I hope nothing is t
said Constance. “ I do
can be anything,” she
a mental survey of all th
cared about, and thought
them could have reach
morning.

Her father smiled a l
close to him. “ You re
uncle said to you at Fulk
he.

“ Oh ! that is it !” cr
relieved. “ I am sure ur
I care nothing about it,
meant to do as he sa
he had not time to sig

with the exception of a few legacies too trifling to name, he has left the whole of his property to yourself."

Constance started to her feet with one expression of blank wonder overspreading her face.

"Yes, Constance," said her father sadly, "you are an heiress. How will you bear it?"

"Oh! papa!" she cried eagerly, "now mamma can have a carriage, and can go to the sea-side when she wishes it; and I can pay Harry's partnership, and Edgar can be what he likes, and—oh! such a number of things that I have wished to do. You can have Mr. A—— to see you so often—"

"And you?" said her father.

"Oh! I want nothing," said Constance smiling through her tears, "if you would but look pleased, dear papa."

And her father did look pleased, partly to gratify her, and partly because there

were no signs as yet of her having been made selfish by prosperity.

He gave her a description of the reading of the will, and painted the rage and disappointment of the Parker family when her name was pronounced. Mr. Frederick Parker had retired from the room in tears ; the first Constance ventured to hint, that he was ever likely to have shed.

Constance rejoiced to think that the Parkers were a very rich family, and that the wealth so unexpectedly put into her hands, was not taken from those who had any real occasion for it.

They sat talking and planning until it was time to part for the night. Constance could not sleep ten minutes together, for thinking how her mamma would look, and what she would say, when she heard the news ; and her father's last waking thought was a prayer that she might be blest in her prosperity, as she had been a blessing to others in all the

troubles which she had so lightened, that they might scarcely, when they wore their roughest front, be numbered among the sorrows of life.

CHAPTER

A fair dwelling, furnished &
tenant in it.

PROVERBIAL PHII

I'll show you the way—this is to
From such brave guests, to me s

It was a glorious dæ
broad sunlight streamec
green oaks, that were sce
variety of groups, over t
Here and there, whe
branches rose higher

which she had just been reading to her father. Her mother had risen from her chair, and was leaning on her shoulder.

"Where is he now?" said Mrs. D'Oyley.

"Lord Bevis? Oh! lying in the boat, just under that largest oak; he has moored it up to the great root that hangs into the water. I never saw such an idle man."

"You must tell him so," said Mrs. D'Oyley, smiling.

"Though after all, it is very kind in him to come and stay with papa in such a dull place; walking with him and reading to him, whenever I am good natured enough to let him interfere with my special employment!"

"Dull place!" said Mrs. D'Oyley smiling.

"Yes, to him," said Constance eagerly; "after London, after all the excitement of politics, and all the bustle, and glitter of society there."

“ But you know Lord Bevis said he never went out.”

“ Well it is very kind of him,” persisted Constance ; “ though as for Leyton, so far from thinking it dull, I am never tired of sitting at this window, looking at this one view, the water sparkling as the rays drop through the branches, and the deer stealing down to the stream, or bounding among the trees yonder as fast as thought. I love this place.”

“ It is indeed a beautiful spot,” said Mrs. D'Oyley. ●

“ And this old library, with the brown thick volumes which I believe nobody ever touched till I came here. I love reading better than I ever did.”

“ What were you reading to your papa, my dear ?”

“ Froissart, I am never tired of him. What minuteness of description, what wild and incredible romance there is in almost every page ; and then the pictures would

make one die of laughing! Look at those men tossing the tents over as if they were making hay, and the poor wretches scrambling out like bees from a hive."

"And where is your papa?"

"Gone to walk in the flower garden with Mary, where I hope he finds it warm enough. She, happy girl, never knows what it is to have freckles. I have five on my nose, and must nurse myself, if I do not wish to be turned into a leopard."

"Did not Lord Bevis recommend you something the other day?"

"Yes, May-dew: a pretty remedy to suggest to anybody in June!"

"But if you will ride, you know my dear," said Mrs. D'Oyley smiling.

"Oh! I could not give up my rides on any account. Are you come to remind me that I am going out with you," she asked, as Lord Bevis entered the room.

"I was afraid I should be too late again," he replied.

“ Ah ! yesterday ! ” said Constance holding up her finger.

Lord Bevis merely smiled ; sat down beside her with the air of a person quite domesticated in the house, and began to turn over the contents of her work-basket.

“ Now really, Miss D'Oyley, what a shame it is to work this beautiful print in your horrid worsted. The two Leonoras ! Mrs. D'Oyley, only look at it.”

“ I have not done a stitch of it,” cried Constance, pulling it out of his hand ; “ that is Mary's. Such a fault finding creature as you are, I never saw ! ”

“ No, this is yours, altogether in a humbler walk of art—this

Parrot with twin cherries in his beak.

When do you think it will be finished ? ”

“ Never, unless you like to complete it for me. I have a nicer pattern than that which I bought at H—— the other day.”

“ Oh ! true, that garland of snuff colour-

ed roses, which we rather differed about at the time. Am I to have the honour of riding with you to-day?"

"As soon as I have fastened off, I shall go and dress; and will you watch, mamma, that he does not make my work-basket in a greater litter than it is, while I am away?"

She did not put his forbearance to a very lengthened test; for it was a boast of her's, which Lord Bevis often disputed, that she dressed quicker than anybody.

"Let me see," said Constance, "papa, mamma, and Mary, drive to H——, and I shall not ride far, because I know Edgar will be here this morning."

"Not till evening I think, my dear," said her mother.

"I wish I had a bet upon it," said Constance laughing, as she left the room with Lord Bevis.

She proved right in this instance. It was not long after the party had dispersed, as agreed upon, before a post-chaise drove

up the avenue, with the horses in a great heat, and stopped at the hall door.

"Well, Tim," cried Edgar, as he sprang out, and ran up the steps, "well, Tim, so here you are."

"Yes, Master Edgar. My! how you have grown. Here we all are, Sir."

"And where is Constance, and papa, and mamma?"

"Miss Constance is out riding with my Lord Bevis; and Master and Missis are gone with Miss Hilton to H——."

"What! Is Lord Bevis here?"

"Oh, yes! Master Edgar; that's nothing, that aint."

This was meant to imply that Lords were trifles in this altered state of things; and not to deny that the habits of the present Lord had undergone a remarkable alteration.

"Miss D'Oyley, Sir, will be home in an hour; and perhaps you would like to take luncheon after your journey," said a tall footman whom Edgar had never seen.

“No, thank you,” replied Edgar, looking attentively at him.

“Miss Constance said she thought you would be hungry ; but she did not know rightly when to expect you, Master Edgar,” said Tim.

“Oh! you stop here, Tim, I want to ask you all about the place. Any trout in the river? Constance said there was a stream in the park.”

“Oh! such a many, Master Edgar, and a tame stag as Miss Constance feeds with bread from her hand ; and I knows an elm tree with a hoot owl’s nest. The young ones are not flown yet.”

“Then won’t I? No, stop,” said Edgar “I’ll wait first to see them all, and then, Tim, you show me the tree. But I want to go over the house and the stables. What sort of horses have they got, I wonder?”

“Miss Constance has bought such a beauty for you, Master Edgar, she has—” said Tim.

see why Miss Constance's
great fortune ; though I
say where it was to come

" Bless me, Tim ; what
How I do like those carved
grim faces at the ends."

" It has a ghost," said
" walks every night at
twelve."

" And lives in that
time!" said Edgar, pointing
walnut chest very richly
about as high as a side
Constance for the key
home."

" No, don't, please, Mr

Constance and Lord Bevis with a couple of grooms behind them, galloping up the avenue.

Constance pulled up in a great hurry, did not wait for Lord Bevis to help her off; but sprang from her saddle, and ran up the steps.

"I thought he was come," said she throwing her arms round him, "so I have been riding a race all the way home. Well now, Edgar dear, come in and tell me.—No; first, Lord Bevis, this is Edgar.—Oh! come in to luncheon. I won't keep you fasting while I change my habit."

Lord Bevis gave his arm to Constance, and they went into the dining-room. They were scarcely seated when the butler informed Constance that Sir Morgan Wyndham was in the drawing-room.

"Did you say papa was out, Evans?"

"I did, Miss D'Oyley."

"Oh! then show him in here, we are all starved;—do say you are for once, Lord

CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

vis ; and I cannot leave the table for anything short of the Emperor of China."

Sir Morgan Wyndham was a young man with a very small property, and a still smaller allowance of brains, if he could be said to be accommodated with such an article at all. He was very willing to join the party, and accordingly took his place at the table.

"This is the first time, Miss D'Oyley," said Sir Morgan, "that I have been so happy as to see you in your habit. I assure you it becomes you exceedingly ; but then everything that you wear—"

"True," said Constance ; "but you never saw me, Sir Morgan, in a brown apron making pies ! Don't I look well in that, Lord Bevis ?"

"You have never shown me the brown apron," said Lord Bevis.

"I have it up stairs," said Constance.
"You see the fact was this : you know Sir Morgan, that papa was a poor clergyman—horrid ! was it not ?"

"I really didn't," said Sir Morgan.

"You said nothing ; but you looked. Well, we had a servant, a very respectable young woman too, who could not make lies—for her life she couldn't, so I used to go down into the kitchen and make them for her ; and very good pies they were, as Lord Bevis could testify if he was of a grateful disposition."

Now Sir Morgan was full of a false mean pride, which made such an idea shocking to him ; but he wanted Miss D'Oyley's estate, and therefore he endured this account, and many others, with which Constance favoured him from time to time.

"Really," said Sir Morgan, after a pause.

"You ride out very often, do you not ?"

"Every day. Will you help yourself to some cold chicken ? I have not skill enough to carve."

"I beg your pardon. Very improvable property, some of your's!"

"So Lord Bevis tells me," said Constance.

she continued, "so we r
at some meadows which A
me to sell; and I think
I am fond of experiments

"You will find it answ
ed," said Lord Bevis.

"Are Sir Guy and La
from town?" asked Sir

"Just come back, I b

"Have they not calle

"No—I am not—wh
Bevis?—Not a county p

"Such near neighbou

"A mere matter of
stance.

"Of good taste," re

the grace to ask you to take any after your ride."

"Don't, pray," she said ; " I cannot tolerate wine at this time of day ; only pass the Lachrymæ to Sir Morgan."

"There are a number of butterflies painted on my plate," said Edgar, who having come to an end of his luncheon was enabled to study the design.

" Yes, and fire-flies on mine," said Constance, pushing it towards him. " I shall leave you here, Edgar, if you have not finished, and go into the drawing-room."

Sir Morgan asked her some questions about the picture gallery ; and she invited him to come and see it, at the same time saying that she could not venture to play cicerone without Lord Bevis to remind her of the proper exclamations.

" I am acquiring a taste for painting, Sir Morgan," said she, as they loitered into the long gallery ; " and papa is sitting for his miniature ; but low habits do so cling to one. I always long for a hoop

or a skipping rope when I come into this gallery, while Lord Bevis is thinking how well a Ludovico Caracci would look over that door, or a Palma, dark and dreary."

"Is that an ancestor?" asked Sir Morgan.

"No; a copy of Christian, Duke of Brunswick, from the—the—Honthorst—thank you Lord Bevis. My great uncle's grandfather was a pork-butcher, and never had his portrait taken."

"Now, Miss D'Oyley—" interposed Lord Bevis.

"Well, he was Mayor of H—which was just as bad," said Constance, laughing.

All this was torture to Sir Morgan; but he reflected that other people married low persons for their money, and Constance did not look vulgar, and had beautiful hands and feet, so that he should not be deterred by recollections of her great uncle's grandfather.

"Sir Guy and Lady Bohun are in the drawing-room, Miss D'Oyley," said the butler entering the gallery.

“There is truth in proverbs,” said Constance. “Did you say papa and mamma were out, Evans !”

“I did, Miss D'Oyley.”

“Very well, come then,” said she turning to her companions. Sir Morgan was not sorry to have it reported about that he was on the best possible terms with the heiress ; so he obeyed with great alacrity. Lord Bevis thought he should stay where he was ; but Constance insisted on his coming with her : she would not leave the gallery without him, she said.

He smiled and offered her his arm ; she gave him a quaint look which seemed to mean a great deal, and took it.

Lady Bohun, who ought of course to be mentioned first, was a young lady of forty-five ; she was very cleverly painted, and Constance thought she had the most radiant complexion ever seen ; she was beautifully dressed, and seemed fashionable, and bold in her manners.

Sir Guy was standing at the table look-

ing at the books that lay on it through his ~~his~~ eye-glass. He seemed melancholy and ~~and~~ nervous, and it appeared a great effort to ~~to~~ him to speak. Lord Bevis sank into a low ~~low~~ chair, and said nothing. Lady Bohun, after ~~after~~ the first few words with Constance, addressed herself to Sir Morgan who leaned ~~on~~ on her chair.

“So, you saucy creature! you are losing ~~ag~~ no time,” said she, looking round, and ~~and~~ using a good deal of action with her ~~ser~~ hands.

Sir Morgan laughed, and made some ~~ne~~ reply in a low tone.

Constance, in order to save Sir Guy the ~~the~~ trouble, was talking a good deal; and he ~~he~~ told her he hoped they should be good ~~good~~ neighbours, for he liked the books on her ~~her~~ table.

“It is the most extraordinary thing,” ~~”~~ said Lady Bohun going through two or three attitudes; “he always judges of people by the books that are lying about.”

“ I hope,” said Sir Guy, “ that you have not suffered lately, not seriously at least, in your health, from the bread ?”

“ Bread, I beg your pardon,” said Constance looking puzzled.

“ The miserable harvest last year,” said Sir Guy ; “ the flour is poisonous. I never touch it in any shape ; I live on rice ; there will be an epidemic soon, I am convinced.”

“ Dear ! I hope not,” said Constance.

Sir Guy then began to inform her that Chartism was rapidly gaining ground in the country ; but at the sound of the word Lady Bohun rose hastily.

“ If he gets upon that topic, my dear Miss D'Oyley,” said she, “ he will not have done prophecying till night. I am so delighted to have found you at home. You positively must re-furnish this room ; thank your stars you have not a Sir Guy yet to control your fancies. Well, we shall see a great, *great* deal of each other, I trust. How glad I was, to be sure, when I

never *are* sorry !”

And leaving Constance quite of reply, as if a pistol shot into her ear, she walked Morgan Wyndham.

“Is that the last fashion,” asked Lord Bevis after a pause.

“I don’t know,” returned she, and there was another silence.

“No,” said she to her time ; “I won’t mock him nor his nervous fidgety with his eye-glass, and raising it because he has all that hair combed back.”

“How was it ?” said Lord

“Then you did it on purpose,” said Constance. “I always do say, of all the exasperating — Will you leave off laughing at me, please? Come hither, Edgar. I had a long letter from Harry last week, and he says he has been into Norway trying to shoot some bears, only he had not yet found any. He talks a little Norwegian, and has a pair of snow shoes, which he means to send me when he goes back to Stockholm.”

“Oh! do give them to me, Constance!”

“Perhaps I may; stay, I have the letter in my work-basket; here, you may try and make it out.”

“What are you going to do this afternoon, Miss D'Oyley,” asked Lord Bevis.

“Nothing useful, you may depend on it,” returned Constance. “Oh! I mean to consult Jane about the cloaks for my school-children; and then, perhaps, I shall go down to the river and sit under the oaks.”

“Then I shall find my way down there by and bye,” said Lord Bevis.

“In the meantime,” said Constance, “I wish you would take Edgar under your protection ; if there is a possibility of his killing himself before papa and mamma come home, I know he will. There’s a boat too, Edgar, if you will take great care to step on the side, and swamp it.”

“Stupid !” said Edgar as he left the room.

“Oh ! my cutting out scissors,” said Constance, taking up a very large pair ; “what shall I tell Sir Morgan about these, when he comes again ? I’ll find some good story ; and now for the cloaks.”

Constance was interrupted by the arrival of a Mrs. Agatha Williams, who frequently came to see her. This lady was a spinster, who lived on a small annuity in a cottage near the old church ; and if one individual could ever convert the world from a strong prejudice, this lady

would have been the person to do it. She was neither handsome nor clever, nor rich, Heaven knows ; but every other good quality under the sun had seemed determined to take up its abode with her. She visited hardly at all, for the county families did not care to know her. As for scandal or gossip of any kind, she was an utter stranger to the dispositions which render such occupation delightful : and her dress was so neat, and in such perfect good taste, that Constance often said she would assume just such a costume as soon as she attained the age of forty-one complete.

“ Now, my dear, if you have another pair of those formidable shears for me,” said Mrs. Agatha, “ I shall be glad to help you. I thought there was work in hand, by such dreadful preparation.”

“ Oh ! I fancied myself clever enough to cut a pattern of a cloak ; but if you will, dear Mrs. Agatha — Now, Jane, bring out the cloth. See, they are to have red cloaks, because they look nice in a landscape.”

“ Very good, my dear ! It was a pretty fancy of the Greeks to clothe their old people in grey, for there is something in that sober colour which suits the decaying aspect of age ; and by the same rule young people should look as gay as possible. Look here, child, you will cut into twice as much stuff as is necessary if you fold the cloth in that way.”

“ And you always wear black silk, which looks so nice, Mrs. Agatha.”

“ I have worn it, my dear, ever since my father's death ; we were all in all to each other ; and as it pleased God to take him suddenly, I had not the time to prepare my mind and school it to endure, which I have had since. It would cost me an effort to change my dress ; and I don't see any cause why I should make it. But what a dear affectionate creature you are,” said she, seeing that Constance had her eyes full of tears. “ Come, how many cloaks are we to make out of this cloth ?”

“ Twenty-four,” said Constance drying

her eyes. "What do you think? Sir Morgan was here again this morning,—a wretch!"

"I am afraid you mean to be very cruel to him," said Mrs. Agatha smiling.

"Yes, I do all I can to annoy him," returned Constance. "I know now why Mary disliked suitors so much; it certainly hurts one's vanity a good deal, to be sought for money."

"And yet, my dear, I have seen some ladies in my time who were quite content to be sought for their wealth; thinking it a part of themselves as much as their beauty or their talent might be; and I don't know that it is not as reasonable a cause for admiration, and more sure of lasting."

"Well, now, you know you are going to stay dinner," said Constance, when the last cloak was folded up.

"I, my dear? Susan expects me home by four o'clock."

“ Then Susan is doomed to be disappointed to-day ; let me have your bonnet.”


“ I will—”

“ Nonsense! Your pretty bonnet caps are good enough for any company ; too good indeed for us ; and I'll sing you Jock O'Hazledean, and you shall play at chess with Lord Bevis, and Edgar shall walk home with you if you will not have the carriage ; that is settled. So now let us go down to the water, and tease Lord Bevis.”

“ He is not one of the suitors, is he ?”

“ No ; it is entirely his fondness for papa that brings him and keeps him here. But I have a turn for quarrelling, and when I cannot get up a difference with any one else, I am obliged to attack him.”

It was a cheerful party that evening. When the ladies came in from dinner they sat at the open window ; and as soon as Mary had shown Constance all her purchases at H—, and made over to her all



the worsteds she had matched for her, and all the books she had asked for at the library, Constance made Mrs. Agatha tell them stories of the families who lived in the country a long while ago, long before Mrs. Agatha was born; and in such lore she was well skilled. And then Lord Bevis came in with Mr. D'Oyley; and Mrs. Agatha remarked, that although he led him as carefully as if he were his son, and moreover although he stopped in passing Constance to say something that made her laugh, and begin to scold him, yet he did not altogether give her the idea of meaning to be his son in good earnest.

She did not know, of course; but he took his place beside Miss Hilton, and seemed to have a good deal to say to her in a low voice; and though the chess-board stood before them, and he made some show of arranging the pieces, they still went on talking quietly: Lord Bevis now and then setting up a knight, and Mary now and then putting a stitch into her carpet work,

to her father, and the bell rang
they both seemed surprised t
late. Mrs. Agatha did not
guess, but she laughed rather
body said Lord Bevis was goi
Miss D'Oyley.

CHAPTER XV.

KEEPER.—It grieves me
To see a mighty King with all his glory
Sunk o' the sudden to the bottom of a dungeon,
Whither we should descend that are poor rascals,
If we had our deserts.

FIRST MOOR.—'Tis a strange wonder.

SECOND MOOR.—He gives no ill words, curses, nor repines
not :

Blames nothing, hopes in nothing, we can hear of ;
And in the midst of all these frights, fears nothing.

THE ISLAND PRINCESS.

“AND do you really not mean to read to us this morning?” asked Constance, after having watched Lord Bevis turning over the leaves of a review some time in silence.

“You certainly have a talent for keeping people employed, Miss D'Oyley. I wonder

how many things I have done for you already since breakfast."

"Oh! yes, let us keep a register of them," exclaimed Constance: "first, I allow, you helped Edgar to row us down to the place where I wish to have a summer-house; but I know that was for Mary, and not for me."

Lord Bevis smiled.

"I acknowledge that you wrote a note for me to Mrs. Agatha about the straw bonnets for my school."

"And then I think I gathered you a basket full of flowers."

"Granted."

"After which, I had the pleasure of mending the door of your dove cage."

"Granted."

"Then I sorted the music you are going to have bound."

"Granted again."

"And began a sketch of your grey horse."

"Which was a failure. We will not count the sketch."

"At least you will allow that I cut the leaves of that new novel for you."

"Yes! but then you are very fond of cutting leaves, and gossiping. I told you four pieces of news while you were cutting those leaves."

"Miss Hilton, I hope you are keeping an account of my good deeds?"

"I am indeed; this is the seventh," said Mary, looking up from her worsted work.

"I do admire your setting one to work, Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis; "while you are all the time contentedly sitting in the window seat doing nothing, except spoiling those paper *alumettes*, (number eight, Miss Hilton), which I took the pains to make you."

"Well," said Constance, not quite able to parry this attack, "are you going to read to us?"

"With great pleasure. Here is a very sprightly paper on statistics."

"A little mercy!" exclaimed Constance. "Don't read any of your useful books to us."

"Here is a slight Treatise on the planting

" Oh ! I cannot endure treatises !"

" A pamphlet then ?"

" Nor pamphlets ; they are invariably tiresome."

" You know that if I were but to call a *brochure*, you would find it charming directly. It is astonishing what a French word does for any commodity."

" This to me !" said Constance, " who never even wear a pair of French gloves ! What is that book on your left ?"

" Clarendon."

" Your pet book. Every body has a pet book which they like to dip into. Your's is Clarendon. Mary's, at present, appears to be the *Proverbial Philosophy*. Edgar reads nothing but Charles O'Malley, and I always had a penchant in favour of Milton's smaller poems."

" By the bye," said Mary, " there is one thing I must recollect when I go to town. I must take care to see Delaroche's pictures. Your eulogy upon French words put me in mind of them."

“That is a duty I have already gone through,” said Lord Bevis. “The only dislike I have to a fine work of art, is that everybody is expected to have seen it.”

“But I am not going to town at all,” said Constance ; “and therefore I shall be obliged to you to describe to me these two pictures which everybody is talking about.”

“It is so very difficult to describe a picture.”

“You can but try, you know,” said Constance.

“Well, to begin with the largest (size being a very common standard of merit with people as regard paintings) it depicts Charles I. in the guard-room on the morning of his execution. This picture, I think, is both, in conception and execution, quite equal to the ‘Strafford ;’ but the subject is less attractive: we know that the King was exposed to the most revolting indignities, but the mind shrinks from seeing them so vividly depicted.”

“I should think so,” said Mary ; “but

let us hear how Delaroche has dealt with that mirror of all princely feeling."

"The King is seated in the centre of the picture," said Lord Bevis, "with a book of devotion in his hands; one brutal soldier is actually hanging on the chair and puffing tobacco smoke in his face. Another, painted almost miraculously, with a deep scar on his forehead, is also leaning on the chair and lifting up a wine glass while he appears to be shouting a drinking song. A man in the foreground, with his head dropped on a table, is sleeping by the fire—the red glare reflected on his steel trappings. Some fellows at a window are looking out into the grey morning, watching the progress of the scaffold; the warm, red fire-light diffused through the room is well contrasted with the grey tone of the distance."

"But the King?" said Constance.

"The King, to my feeling, is neither conspicuous for dignity nor for the reverse, for this simple reason:—that the moment is not likely to call it forth, except that a

perfect repose of attitude where you would rather expect some passion, almost verges on the sublime. The prevailing expression of the figure is a languid calmness—the repose of exhaustion—the pause of feeling after much suffering; this state is interrupted by the insults offered to him, but not strongly, since at such a moment nothing possesses sufficient interest to excite him much. The only expression on the features is that of physical disgust without a trace of anger, and this evinced only by the shrinking of the muscles of the forehead, and, in a slighter degree, of the whole figure. This constitutes the poetry of the picture. There is nothing in ‘Strafford’ so acutely ethical as the conveying, by the slight expression, the whole state of mind, habitual as well as accidental, of the person. There is exactly that tremulous play of muscle that takes place when any one encounters a scent he has a great aversion to.”

“ I recollect,” said Constance, “ one reason I always liked Charles I. was because

he hated that odious smell of tobacco ; but go on, please."

"The King is dressed in black ; his hat and cloak, with its diamond star, fall on the table at his elbow. Delaroche has entirely preserved the likeness while giving him a new expression, for which I think he deserves great credit. He has also painted the hair grey, which is historical ; but I know not whether by any authority he has depicted the moustachios and beard of the old auburn colour. But perhaps the most touching part of the picture is the figure of the King's old attendant, who leans against a pillar to the right of the central group. His brows are lowered ; his hands clasped, clenched in agony ; his eyes, flashing through tears, are fixed upon his master. And considering the fervent attachment with which Charles inspired all who were about his person, and the man's utter inability to redress the wrongs he feels so deeply, I think him at that moment the most to be pitied of the two."

"So do I," said Mary ; " there is something ennobling in suffering ; but to see one whom we revere exposed to indignity, death would be preferable."

"Well," said Constance, " now for the other picture."

"Strafford is described as pausing on his way to execution to receive the blessing of Archbishop Laud. This scene we all know took place as he passed the window of his old friend's house ; but the painter has by a very pardonable anachronism transferred poor Laud to the Tower, and placed the group beneath the grating of his dungeon. The picture, when you first come upon it, is a real illusion ; you have a glimpse of the Tower-stairs with four or five persons upon them. Strafford kneels in the centre of the picture ; one hand sinks his hat to the ground, the other rests on his knee ; his head is stooped to receive the blessing of the prelate."

"Ay !" said Constance, " veneration is a

beautiful sentiment ; little perking people don't know how to revere."

"Laud's uplifted hands are discerned through the bars of his prison ; the head being just visible at the moment of falling back ; the eyes, in the act of swooning, are wonderfully painted."

"I recollect," said Mary, "he did faint, poor old man ! And is Strafford a portrait ?"

"No," replied Lord Bevis ; "unfortunately the artist had never seen a portrait of Strafford, and they say some French General was obliging enough to sit for that great statesman. It is impossible for any two heads to be more dissimilar ; but happily for the spectator, not one person in a thousand is acquainted with the features of Strafford, while everybody, who pretends to art, is familiar with the melancholy face of Charles."

"And are there more figures ?" asked Constance.

"Yes ; close behind him are the figures of the clergyman who is to attend him to the scaffold, and his son, who has thrown himself upon the breast of his companion in an agony of grief ; and a little lower on the stairs, stands the officer who bears the warrant for his execution."

"Well, now for the faults," said Constance.

"I am no critic," Lord Bevis began.

"That I am sure you are not, if you feel any difficulty in finding fault," returned Constance.

"Still, without aspiring to the dignity of criticism," said Lord Bevis, "it struck me that in both pictures the hands were exceedingly clumsy ; of course I do not allude to the common persons represented ; but the hands of Strafford, Laud, and the King, are both in form and colour such as you might see in any artisan ; while Van-dyke's pictures have acquainted us with the fact that they were remarkable for the beauty of their hands."

“ True,” said Mary ; “ every one remembers too the Queen’s praise of Strafford’s hands during his trial.”

“ How very French !” said Constance, “ at such a time !”

“ There is no national prejudice in *that* remark, is there ?” asked Lord Bevis.

“ Talking of hands,” said Constance, not directly replying to the question, “ there are some people in this house *who* are very proud of their’s, and who take such care of them, that they wear gloves all day, even in-doors.”

“ Ah ! do you know any such person, Miss Hilton ?” said Lord Bevis smiling.

“ People never see themselves,” said Constance.

“ Miss D’Oyley is mysterious this morning,” said Lord Bevis.

“ And white gloves, too,” continued Constance, “ which makes it worse.”

“ To be sure it does. That is an extravagance as well as a weakness.”

“ I think it must be almost time

ress," said Mary, "if you still insist, dear Constance, that I should call with you upon Lady Bohun."

"Yes, presently. I only wish first to know if Lord Bevis can explain—I mean can defend Charles the First's conduct to satisfaction?"

"I have my own views upon it," replied Lord Bevis; "but it would be a great pity to deprive people of so good a handle against Charles. When a man's memory is persecuted, it is very pleasant for everybody to have the power of throwing a stone at their turn. But I agree with Miss Hilson, it is quite time for you to begin dressing, if you mean to call upon Lady Bohun."

"There is no hurry," said Constance; "I have a curiosity to know what you think of the case, because it does look so very odd,—the King's conduct in that affair."

"Those were odd times, Miss D'Oyley."

“ I know that ; but people ought to keep their words even in odd times.”

“ Strafford gave him back his word.”

“ You don't mean to defend him upon that plea !” exclaimed Constance, “ because I think it aggravates his guilt a thousand fold.”

“ Well, Miss D'Oyley, perhaps I have a weakness in favour of Charles I. He was the only real patron that art has ever had in this country. He fostered poetry, he encouraged plays ; he introduced the idea into society that Shakspeare was a great man. He was deeply learned, and also highly accomplished in all sorts of exercises ; he had a great love for morality, and moreover was to my taste exquisitely handsome. I dare say I am prejudiced in his favour.”

“ And what is all this to the purpose ?”

“ Ay, let us talk over the affair. The King promised Strafford, that whatever the sentence which might close his trial,

he should take no hurt in person or estate. He was condemned ; and aware of the violent feeling prevalent against him, he sent to place his head at the King's disposal, and even to urge that his life might be sacrificed as a means of reconciling the two contending parties. Charles was only the more firmly resolved to bring him through in safety. Well ; the mob besiege Whitehall howling for the blood of the favourite, the republic leaders press the King to sign the warrant ; the Queen in an agony of apprehension for the personal safety of her husband and children implores him with tears to sacrifice Strafford to the popular voice ; his nerves give way, and he yields."

"Ah ! shame !" exclaimed Constance.

"He gives way to the exigence of the moment ; he is startled into an act unworthy of a King ; unworthy of him, since he never for an instant contemplated the execution of the warrant. He immediately

organised a plan to convey the Earl to Holland. The brig was in the channel, a boat waiting at the Tower stairs, when the whole scheme was betrayed by the abandoned Lady Carlisle, who had transferred her regard from Strafford to Pym, and had given the republican a hint to which he was not slow in attending. In vain Charles recalled the sentence ; in vain sent his son to the House of Commons to plead his cause. Strafford fell ; and very naturally all the gentlemen and ladies who do not belong to the Tory party, pronounce Charles the most perjured of friends, and the most degraded of sovereigns."

"Well, I think," said Constance, after a pause, "I shall wear my pink bonnet when I go to Lady Bohun's."

"That is the impression I have made, Miss Hilton," said Lord Bevis smiling, "the pink bonnet is more important than the character of Charles I. But I am happy to state that you are not immediately going

to Lady Bohun's, for while we were talking I saw Sir Morgan ride up the avenue, and he is now in your hall."

"Can there be a greater bore? No time to deny oneself! Ah! how do you do?"

"So charmed to find you at home," said Sir Morgan as he entered. "Such a beautiful day I hardly expected—"

"I was just going out," said Constance; "we were merely waiting to settle a disputed point in history;—you are in time to help us."

"I am afraid I don't recollect much—I never was very—"

"Oh! it was not at all an abstruse point; it was only whether Dionysius the Second had two wives or not."

"Ha! ha! I don't just at this moment remember—"

"No? Do you approve of second marriages?"

"I scarcely—"

“ I wonder whether he has an opinion on anything ? ” said Constance aside to Mary. “ I'll try something else. Can you tell me whether there is a good shop for Berlin wool in H—— ? The one we go to — is so dear.”

“ Do you know Johnson's in Hart Street ? ”

“ That is the very one we deal at.”

“ I am afraid you will hardly find another ; at least I don't know of one.”

“ Then we must submit ; but it is so disagreeable to be imposed upon. You know when I could not afford it, I was obliged to make bargains about everything, it would not do to pay a penny more for a thing than it was worth.”

Sir Morgan looked uncomfortable ; and though he certainly meant one day to ask her to share her estates with him, he thought he had done quite enough for that time. He had shown himself ; and he fancied she did not often see such a

person, take him altogether. He did not know that at that moment she was trying to make out why his dress looked so vulgar, and whether he meant to imitate the costume of a groom, or simply of a sporting character.

“I must tear myself away,” said Sir Morgan, rising at last.

“Do ;” said Constance easily, as she turned to ring the bell ; “for us, we are going to call on Lady Bohun.”

“A charming woman, is she not ?”

“Decidedly.”

“And a very pretty drive to her house.”

“So it is.”

“Can I do any thing for you at H—— ?”

“No, I can't trust you. I don't think you understand worsted-work.”

“I assure you I have succeeded once or twice in—”

“Indeed. What do you call this colour ?”

“Lilac, I think.”

“Dahlia we call it. Well, can you take

"Oh! I know your will
you must be very particular i

"I think I may venture."

"Very good. Don't lose
(she had given him about an
Now, good-morning if you pl

Sir Morgan took the hint :

"Pray, Miss Hilton, is t
call flirting?" asked Lord
very amusing to me to see
acted that I have hitherto
books."

"Why I was going to s
for being so rude," said M
heard a gentleman more
out."

belted with dark beech woods, now abruptly descending between chalky banks hung with creepers, or frowning with Scotch firs. Lady Bohun was at home. Constance shrugged her shoulders, clasped up her little fringed parasol, and stepped out of her carriage.

They were shown into a room splendidly furnished, crowded with rich china, and Indian ornaments, and alabaster jars, and Bohemian glass vases filled with the choicest flowers. The atmosphere was all perfume, the couches were heaped with silken cushions, the tables crowded with gaudy and expensive trifles; but there was a want of artistical arrangement, which to some people would scarcely be compensated by the costly refinement which was visible all around.

A young man sat at a table copying music, another was leaning in at the window close to which Lady Bohun was seated. She was splendidly dressed, and held in her hands one of those beautiful chysophrase

gestures as if she had been deaf of speech altogether, and had no way of explaining her meaning.

She rose, told Constance best of creatures to return soon, and congratulated her on the news made known to Miss Hilton.

The young man, writing in his pocket, put his glass into his eye, and stood in a moment's pause, while the other whistled. He then made haste from Don Pasquale to a friend.

Lady Bohun dismissed the gentleman by giving him her card, and he, desiring him to fill it with the names of the persons he had been mentioning, and to let her know of the other if he had any more to say.

impossible to transcribe faster than he did, but that there were still a few bars left.

Then Lady Bohun asked Constance to try her new *piccola*, to which she immediately consented ; and having opened it herself, and drawn a chair to the instrument, without any offer of assistance on the part of the young man, sat down and played a beautiful fragment from one of the German composers.

After the performance, conversation rather languished ; the young man would not speak to Constance or Mary, because he did not know who they were ; and if in a small circle, one person is obstinately silent it perceptibly checks the wish to talk on all sides.

Constance looked at Mary, and both rose. It was with some difficulty that she managed to edge past the writer of music ; for having finished his task, he had pushed back his chair, and his feet were just in her way—a circumstance that he did not appear to consider as worthy of notice

As they were getting into the carriage, Constance saw Sir Guy in a long, odd, great coat, and straw hat, pacing up and down under a sunny wall, with his hands behind him, looking cold and solitary, and hypochondriacal.

Certainly his lady could not be accused of trying to enliven his existence ; as one of her intimate friends said to her, she decidedly preferred the society of younger
men

“ That is a good thing over,” said Mary, as she settled her shawl. “ I did not expect to find her ladyship at home ; but I am enjoying quite a holiday here, in respect of morning calls. I have no right to complain.”

“ Did you not think that young man was barely civil ?” asked Constance ; “ I hope I am not growing *exigeante*, but it struck me so.”

“ Which one, the man with the lisp ? Oh ! very rude, very like a great many young men ! Had he known you

were Miss D'Oyley of Leyton, you would have found him quite troublesome in his attention."

"But how wrong that is!"

"True, it would seem so much better for them to keep away altogether. When Eustace was hanging about Hillsted, I used to send him to the stables directly I saw any carriage driving up, belonging to people whom he did not care about."

"A very good plan!"

"Though it is in a great measure our own fault. If you attack a man of that kind, you can make him attend to you; but perhaps his courtesies are hardly worth asking for."

"Is it not strange, dear Mary, that men should prefer such women as they can hardly respect, to a more retired character?"

"Oh! but I think it is a little mistake to suppose that men overlook merit in women. I have known men come home from a party distinctly sensible of the merit of a

quiet unaffected woman ; but it is equally a mistake to suppose that they will be at the trouble of handing merit a cup of tea. I have known men bestow all their attention, which is the current coin of their approbation, upon some bold flirt, whose conduct they have censured without mercy in her absence, while they have spoken in the highest terms of a modest woman with whom they have not exchanged a single word. And their reason for this inconsistency is plain ; the bold woman talks to them ; the modest woman would give them the trouble of talking to her."

" I am quite contented," said Constance, " so long as they make a practice of affection and impertinence. I have no wish at all they should alter it in my favour ; but I don't like to be the especial object of a rude neglect."

The carriage had turned into one of the beautiful glades of Leyton Park. A broad turf walk wound between the trees, beyond which lay a wide lawn of velvet grass,

studded with gigantic beech trees, their long sweeping boughs trailing upon the mossy turf.

“My dear Constance,” said Mary, looking round her as she spoke, “depend upon it you will very seldom have to complain of neglect from the other sex.”

CHAPTER XVI.

FUL.—But beauty, youth, and fortune meeting in you,
I will vouchsafe to marry you.

THE MAID OF HONOUR.

Walk and be cheerful once again ; preserve
That excellent complexion which did steal
The eyes of young and old.

SHAKESPEARE.

CONSTANCE became, though certainly without any direct intention of being so—rather intimate with Lady Bohun. Her Ladyship had taken a fancy for her, which she mistook for a friendship ; and it so happened that the country people within visiting distance were absent from their seats. Constance, who never took the trouble to inquire into the concerns of her

ghbours, thought that they had not concended to notice her ; but the fact was t the Davises of the priory were in Italy, l the Hardings of the Grange were not returned from town ; and the Avonleys re over in Ireland, so that she was left irely to the hospitalities of Lady Bohun. She was a woman who could not live hout excitement, and Constance ascribed her good nature, the eagerness with ich she set on foot pic-nic and archery etings, and riding parties, and long rnings at each other's houses, ostensibly the purpose of practising songs and ets, but really more for flirting and sipping than for any thing else. Mean-ile some of the more distant families led upon her, and her circle became ger and gayer. Lady Bohun contrived t Sir Morgan Wyndham should always included in their parties, but this marked ention did not prevent Constance from ng surrounded with suitors. Of these s always gave the preference to Sir

Morgan, for, as she said to her cousin Mary :

“I don't mean to have any of them now I know Sir Morgan has no heart, but I cannot quite answer for the others as have not seen so much of them ; and as don't want to break anything that does not belong to me, I amuse myself with him without compunction.”

It so happened that Sir Guy's state of health had prevented Lady Bohun from sending a regular dinner invitation to Constance at the proper time ; but one day it appeared in due form ; and as she acted scrupulously under her parents' direction in such matters, it was accepted, that is to say, Mrs. D'Oyley and her daughter agreed to go.

Constance indeed very much wished send Mary in her stead, but to this her cousin strongly objected. She felt presentiment that she should have a headache that night, and Lady Bohun was favourite of her's ; she was an art

woman, and Mary had seen plenty such.

"In short, my dear," she concluded, "society is a novelty, and I dare say a very charming one to you ; it is a drug to me, so pray don't force me to take it."

Mr. D'Oyley begged the young ladies to remember that Lord Bevis would be with him ; and that he was really well able to pass an evening alone at the very worst : but Mary remained firm. She had five things to do ; she had to write to Eustace, to finish her novel, to begin a purse, to tune her harp, and to feign a headache. So Constance having made a beautiful toilet under the supervision of Mary and the austere Gibson, who almost frightened her little maid out of her wits, set off with her mother to keep her engagement.

The drawing-room was full when she arrived, and in the dim twilight of a summer's evening she was unable to recognise any of the guests. Sir Morgan, however, soon found his way to her side,

and began to whisper his unmeaning compliments in her ear. Much as she despised such a habit, there was about her a fund of animal spirits which made her find amusement in returning the most inappropriate answers to all he said, so that her discourse somewhat resembled a game at cross purposes. Therefore when he praised her complexion, she told him that she did not prefer his chesnut horse to the bay; not that she was any judge except of the length of his mane, but such was her opinion. And when he ventured to express his admiration of her singing, she remarked that the Spanish jessamine he was so interested about had not yet blown, and, she understood, never did blow till late in the summer.

Sir Morgan thought of Leyton, and told her she was very witty. He was desired by Lady Bohun to take Miss D'Oyley in to dinner, for she had promised him her interest, in his pursuit, which implied that those paltry assiduities should devolve

upon him which constitute in our days the vocabulary of the tender passion.

It was only while her companion was arranging her chair for her, as she took her place at the table, that she observed, just opposite to her, Captain Bohun engaged in performing the same good office for the lady whom he had escorted into the room.

She felt herself blushing, and to conceal it, she feigned to be engaged in extricating her dress from the chair, then looked up, met his eye, and bowed.

He returned her salutation with much animation, and with an appearance of pleasure that could not be mistaken. Sir Morgan who watched every change in her countenance with the same eagerness that a broker watches the rise and fall of the funds, looked inquiringly at her.

“I was in such a fright,” said she, “I thought I had caught the trimming of my dress.”

“I saw you start,” said her accom-

plished companion, "and I wondered what on earth could,—but that accounts for,—because such a killing,—"

"Right," said Constance, "I might have known that this evening-primrose colour would kill my complexion; but I shall be wiser next time."

Sir Morgan as in duty bound, protested that no colour that was ever invented, could possibly diminish the lustre of her charms; but Constance, for some reason or other was more annoyed than usual by his compliments, and turned away in disdain. She even condescended to enter into a conversation with her next neighbour respecting the game on her estate, which she regretted that she could not shoot. But this suggested to Sir Morgan certain allegorical nonsense about her skill in shooting which seemed to her to have been stolen from some old valentine.

But through all this talking, she was puzzling her brains about Captain Bohun's sudden appearance; why had he not come

to speak to her in the drawing-room? She thought it very rude, and she could not account for it. Did he mean to be cool to her in consequence of what had passed? This was very unjust, for she was sure there never had been a refusal so little personal; so absolutely dictated by circumstances. It was shameful that he did not meet her like a friend at least: she grew more and more angry and vexed; and, lost in thought, forgot to reply to the courtesies with which Sir Morgan overwhelmed her.

Her musings were interrupted by Captain Bohun asking her to take wine; and she fancied that he went through this ceremony gravely, though she could hardly accuse him of doing any thing in any other manner. So, as women often do, she tried to show him that she was remarkably happy and comfortable, and began to patronise Sir Morgan's small talents.

At dessert she watched his progress with great interest, while he made her a basket

of orange peel, and then suffered him to construct a candle of apple and almonds, which he triumphantly lighted and presented to her ; for he was one of those deplorable men who are very ingenious with their fingers. But she had seldom been more pleased, than when Lady Bohun gave the signal to rise, and she threw aside her orange basket and followed the stream of ladies into the drawing-room. There, they fell according to their wont in little groups ; the married women, who were domestic, seeking out their intimate friends to compare notes about their children's age, and teeth, and their progress through the usual disorders ; those who were of a gayer disposition discussing dress, flirtations, and parties, with now and then a little whispered bit of wicked scandal.

Constance, who chanced to be the only single woman present, found herself alone, and took her seat by a beautifully painted table loaded with all the newest and most costly annuals. Here she occupied herself

in turning over the pages of a pathetic story, regarding a young lady in boy's clothes, who spent her life in wandering about a wood until such time as she was found dead in a cave; and suffered her thoughts to return to the dinner party, and her own conduct at the table. In fact, she was very much discontented with the part she had played. She was aware that she had suffered her manner to express every possible encouragement to Sir Morgan, merely from a feeling of pique towards Captain Bohun; though what particular cause of offence she could make against him would be hard to say. She felt that, supposing his feelings towards her had changed, so marked a display of her indifference was needless and uncourteous. He was free as air, without her signifying to him that he might be so. If, on the contrary, he still retained a regard for her, what so likely to estrange him as the pleased attention with which she listened to an idiot like Sir Morgan? One thing she

resolved upon, to conduct herself with great discretion for the rest of the evening. Captain Bohun should see, whether it was as a matter of interest to him or not, that she had not quite lost her senses so far as to enjoy the absurd homage of a man like Sir Morgan. With these determinations she closed the book, and saw Lady Bohun standing smiling before her.

“Almost in tears I declare,” said the Ladyship leaning on the table, and looking full in her face; “I waited and watched, hoping to see a pearly drop or two before I interrupted you, just as a tribute you know to author or authoress; but will you, if you have arrived at the catastrophe (not for worlds before) favour these ladies, particularly Lady Alton, with that strange sweet ballad of yours, ‘Chains on the Cities?’”

“With all my heart,” said Constance, rising and going to the piano.

“The advantage of this is twofold,” said Lady Bohun, as she stood beside Constance,

“ we hear some sweet singing while we are taking our coffee; (you never touch it, do you ?) and the first sound of the piano generally brings the gentlemen from the dining-room; and what a bore it is, this dreadful pause before they make their appearance. Don't you think so ?”

“ I cannot quite agree with you, my dear Lady Bohun,” said Constance, while her fingers wandered over the keys with a sort of trembling expectation as she listened to the opening of the door, and saw one after another of the gentlemen make their appearance, according to Lady Bohun's prophecy—all but the one she looked for.

“ That music,” said Sir Guy, who had stood listening to the last part of the song, “ is really married to immortal verse! Whose is it ?”

“ Loder's,” returned Constance, “ the most original, I think, of all our modern composers.”

The other gentlemen now crowded round Constance, and begged for something else.

“ By and bye, when all the other ladies have played,” said Constance, “ I will see about it. I am going now to get some coffee, which I may venture to do, Lady Bohun, since I have shown off my voice first.”

Lady Bohun called Constance a vain creature, and desired Sir Morgan to bring her a cup of coffee.

But Constance was tired of his attentions, as well as of those of three other gentlemen present, who all wished to see Leyton ; she said she preferred helping herself, and then asked Sir Guy to show her his new musical snuff-box. Sir Guy was a collector of musical snuff-boxes, and nothing gratified him more than to find anybody willing to hear his waltzes.

Constance listened patiently to one tune after another, while the gentlemen loitered about near her, wondering when the exhibition would be over ; for the cabinet of curiosities, in which Sir Guy kept his boxes, stood in a recess, and there was

just room for himself and Constance
le it ; this arrangement did not exactly
t the wishes of her suitors ; but it
ghted her—she escaped the persecution
ir Morgan, and gave her whole atten-
to the fairy music that sparkled out
re her.

When the waltzes were all finished,
stance recollected that Sir Guy was a
ted entomologist, and had a prodigious
s collection of foreign beetles and butterflies
impaled in cases after the most
proved methods.

ere was a new occupation, and one
did not promise to come to a speedy
clusion. Sir Guy lingered over every
with the deepest interest, pointing out
Constance, in a mournful tone, the
ral monsters which had dropped a
or a wing since they came into his
ession. “ It was very singular,” he
, “ camphor seemed no protection ;
the air was entirely excluded. Another
gone from that diamond beetle, and

the wing of the locust evidently loose, the climate—he supposed—the shocking climate ! And he shivered as he spoke, for no human contrivance could make Sir Guy acknowledge himself warm even on a mild June evening.”

“ Can you make room for me, Sir Guy ? ” asked Lady Alton drawing a chair close to the recess. “ I want to see what charms you keep in those boxes to attract the regards of so young a beauty from all these cavaliers.”

Sir Guy began to talk about the Chartist, and declared that they had held another meeting at H—— the week before last. He could not think what government was about, to suffer such things.

“ Oh ! to be sure,” said Lady Bohun, who was standing sipping her tea near them ; “ we all know government has nothing in the world to do ; it is wonderful that any thing escapes their notice. There,” she said, giving her cup to Sir Morgan, who was hovering about her,

“it is a charity to employ you, you idlest of all created beings.”

Then leaning in a striking attitude on the back of a chair, she asked Constance why on earth she was moping herself to death in that corner.

Constance not finding it very easy to answer, drew towards her one of the boxes of insects.

“Butterflies versus gadflies ; *n'est-ce pas ?*” said Lady Alton in a low tone. She laughed, and did not deny it.

“But I shall not allow this monopoly ; nobody can suffer it long,” said Lady Bohun, drawing Constance forward by the hand. “Come, we will have a quadrille : nobody plays cards here, so we may as well dance away the evening ; I must go find a musician.”

It was in vain that Constance offered her services to play for the dancers. Lady Bohun tapping her cheek, told her not to be cruel, and silly, and capricious. Sir

Morgan was by her side in a moment, and she was obliged to stand up with him, just when Sir Guy and Lady Alton were beginning to talk on a subject which she wished to listen to, though she would not have confessed to herself that she was really interested in it.

“So your nephew is positively come to see you at last!” said Lady Alton.

Constance did not quite hear Sir Guy's answer. He said something about leave of absence, mixed up with a tirade against young men for not knowing their own minds.

She was lost in conjectures respecting the meaning of this last phrase, until a pause in the dance brought her back to her place.

“What a waste,” said Lady Alton, “for a young man of his talent to enter the army! He has brains enough for a prime minister. It is a positive sin.”

“So I told my brother,” returned Sir

ly; "I always said that my nephew
ght to be in parliament. I am sure
mebody ought who would do something
out these Chartists!"

"Oh, Heavens!" cried Lady Bohun,
ho had come to a stand near them,
fancy sending Captain Bohun into par-
ment to talk down the Chartists! A
an who never opens his mouth even in
room!"

"I did all I could to induce him to offer
nself for the county this last election,"
id Sir Guy in a crying tone; "but my
other is so obstinate, and Reginald must
eds defer to his father's wishes in the
atter; which, I must say, I thought quite
necessary."

"And quite ridiculous into the bargain,"
id Lady Bohun, "for he could never
pect to be so gay anywhere, as in town
ring the season!"

This argument was felt to be unanswer-
le. Nobody defended Captain Bohun; but

Lady Alton asked Sir Guy where this obstinate and ridiculous personage had hid himself, for she had not time to shake hands with him before dinner, and he was a very old friend of her's.

"Is he not here?" asked Sir Guy, raising his eye-glass nervously several times; "bless my soul, I had not the least idea. I will ring and inquire what he has done with himself."

The servant who answered his inquiries had no more ideas on the subject than Sir Guy; and the baronet was obliged to content himself with a half-whispered hope to Lady Alton that his nephew might not be growing eccentric, for really in these days there was only one step between that and absolute madness!

Constance was seated idly in a low chair after the dancing, replying at random to Sir Morgan's pretty speeches, when Lady Bohun came up to her.

"Your cruel mamma," she said, "is

going to carry you off so early. I had hoped you would have danced another quadrille with a certain person ; but I know you are the most submissive of daughters, so, *cara*, we will task this true knight to put on your shawl and see you to the carriage."

"I like to put on my own shawl," said Constance rising, and avoiding the offered arm of Sir Morgan ; "and I am going to say good night to Sir Guy. I dare say it is not fashionable ; but low people always do it."

"What is her motive for always declaring her origin ?" asked Sir Morgan.

"I cannot think," returned Lady Bohun ; "for every body knows the D'Oyleys are in a straight line from somebody who fought under William the Conqueror. But she is quite a character."

Sir Morgan looked wonderfully relieved. He had no dislike to Constance ; indeed, like young Slender, he loved her "as well as e'er a woman in Gloucestershire ;"

and now that there was no drawback to the connexion in respect of birth, he felt quite happy, and resolved to end his suspense at the first opportunity. It was with a feeling of virtuous satisfaction that he made this resolve, for he convinced himself, (as men are rather apt to do) that the poor girl was devotedly fond of him; and as her fortune made the step at once prudent and agreeable, he determined not to break her heart.

Constance gained something by her move. Sir Guy insisted upon cloaking her, and only resigned her to the care of Sir Morgan, because he was afraid of the night air if he attended her to her carriage.

"Shall you be at home to-morrow?" asked Sir Morgan in a whisper.

"No," replied Constance as she drew up the glass.

She was not a little surprised, on entering the drawing-room at home, to find Captain Bohun seated quietly beside Ma

embroidering frame, conversing alternately with her and Edgar, who with a long fishing-rod stretched across the floor was winding some line upon the reel. She was a little puzzled at first how she ought to meet him, and what she should say; but he very quickly saved her the trouble of thinking about it. He came up and shook hands with her, expressing the pleasure he felt at finding her so near a neighbour of his uncle's.

All this was done so calmly that she was quite at loss to know what he had thought about her conduct to Sir Morgan, or any other particular that she might have wished to find out. But she resumed her composure as rapidly as a woman generally does, and began to rally him on his sudden disappearance.

“Do but remain here ten minutes more,” she said, “just to let all the company disperse, and they will spread all sorts of wonderful stories of you, all over the country.”

“ You could not have said any thing more calculated to drive him away,” said Mary laughing. “ You did not think it was so late, did you ? No ! I have no more questions to ask about Eustace.”

“ I thought I should have been back long before you came away,” said Captain Bohun to Constance as he took his leave. “ I hope I shall not be so unfortunate another time.”

Constance threw herself into a chair opposite to Mary, who was collecting her worsteds and silks to put them away for the night.

“ Where is papa ?” she asked.

“ Gone to bed.”

“ And Lord Bevis ?”

“ Out riding.”

“ And how long have you been alone !”

“ I have been alone, excepting always the company of Edgar and Captain Bohun ; (who, I hope, are both grateful for the compliment implied,) for about an hour.”

"I wish you had been with us," said Constance.

"Thank you. Have you had a pleasant evening?"

"Remarkably dull."

"Thank you, again. I was very well off at home."

"I should not wonder if Lady Bohun were to call to-morrow."

"Nor I," said Mary smiling. "Captain Bohun could drive her over ; or they could ride ! Her Ladyship does something she calls riding !"

"I wonder what brought him over here to-night."

"To gossip with me about Eustace. What do you think, aunt D'Oyley ? That little piece of mischief, Miss Meredith, is staying with some friends near Eustace ; and trying to turn his head with her admiration and flattery ! Really men are so extra weak that I should not wonder if she were to succeed."

“Has she any money?” asked Edgar, who had picked up that idea at school.

“Not a *denier*; but he has plenty. What I complain of is, that she has nothing which he wants. No sense, no firmness, no talent of any kind. Mercy on us! It is a long time, my dear Constance, since matches were made in Heaven!”

“Did Captain Bohun tell you this?”

“No: I have a letter from Eustace filled with nothing but Miss Meredith; and Captain Bohun does not deny it.”

“I am very sorry, my dear,” said Mrs. D'Oyley. “Suppose he were to come here for a little while!”

“I dare say he could,” said Mary; “and a fortnight with you, Constance, would drive the little simpleton out of his head. Man's love in the present day is very truly

A faint shadow
That every drunken cloud sails over
And makes it nothing.

"I do believe so," said Constance sadly, as she rose to leave the room.

"Constance, dear," said Mary holding her back; "I think I have seen you reading Bacon's Essays lately. Do you recollect, (and he is good authority), he says somewhere that *grave natures are ever constant*?"

"Well, dear?" said Constance pausing, with the candle in her hand.

"Quite a riddle, I see!" returned Mary as she passed her with a smile. "I only hope it will not keep you waking."

Whether or not Mary's remark was calculated to banish sleep, Constance felt very reluctant to make the experiment. She lingered in one of the deep window seats in the gallery watching the rising moon, as the thin clouds gathered around, or melted like mist before its soft and lustrous face. She thought the whole house was at rest, but presently she heard shuffling footsteps mingled with suppressed

laughter and whispers. It was very easy to guess who were the intruders upon her meditations. The door of Edgar's room stole softly open, and that young gentleman crept out followed by Tim, and bearing lines, and nets, and a dark lantern. They were both rather surprised to find Constance up, but their confession was soon made ; they were going down to the water to lay lines for eels. Delightful ! Constance thought it quite cruel to keep Tim up, after he had been at work all day ! She would go herself with Edgar ! She should like to see how they caught eels ! Tim would not, however, be left behind. Miss Constance, bless her ! would not be of any use ; and would stand a great chance of slipping into the water, unless Tim was there to take care of her !

She had no great objection to be left out of the executive part of the business ; all she wished for was a walk in the moonlight. She wrapped on her shawl, let them out

by a side door, and they were soon under the trees. How fresh, how sweet the smell of the grass; the very branches as they rustled in the soft air had a fragrance peculiar to the night.

How strange to see the fleet herd of deer couched stilly among the long fern, every stiff blade sparkling with dew drops! How beautiful the trellised path on which they walked, checquered black and white, by the bright beams that trembled through the trees! How sudden, how sweet the contrast!—Now a shower of silver leaves quivering in the broad light, now deep dark masses sweeping the turf; the boughs and the black shadows beneath mingling and undefined!

And then the water, beautiful by day as it reflects the stately trees, and the Heaven above them, becomes a thousand-fold more solemn, more replete with beauty in the night! Constance called to Edgar, as he dipped his oars in the silver flood,

CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.
ask if he remembered that beautiful lyric
Mrs. Hemans—

Fow on, rejoice, make music
Bright living stream, set free.
The shadows of all glorious things
Are set in thee.

Edgar did not know what came next, and
called to Tim to throw him the line.

It was a luxury to live—to breathe the
cool air—to watch the sparkling drops fall
from the oars—to hear their splash—to see
the boat near the dark bank opposite!

She sat on the root of a tree, leaning over
the water, and almost made up her mind
that she would remain there till morning.

It was so light, that she could easily have
seen to read by the moon's rays. She
wondered how Milton would affect her, read
at such a time; or Shakspeare, with his

eloquent music! No, it was no time to
read, it would be a waste of such delicious
moments! She could not gaze enough at
the glorious scene. It was something

be felt, not read or spoken of. She was thinking aloud, and Edgar, who had laid his line, and was now sitting at her feet, replied to her that all poets were humbugs, except Scott, and that he was a regular fellow.

Constance could easily understand the delight which boys always feel in Scott. He is so thoroughly manly: there is no sentiment, nothing feminine in his composition;—and most poets have had a little touch of tenderness about them. But Scott's pictures are all splendid, or real; there is not that vibration of feeling to be met with in any of his scenes, which may be found chiefly in our old poets. Constance thought of the distinction Coleridge made between the feminine, and effeminate; and wondered how an Englishman could have ventured to make such a declaration. She thought of the rich music, the unimagined tenderness of some of Shakspeare's sonnets. The cadence of some remembered

lines haunted her like an air in music, which will return again and again. She began to repeat them—

That time of year thou mayest in me behold,
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which, by and by, black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

Edgar remarked that this was not a black night; and then asked what she had for dinner at Lady Bohun's.

"I can tell you what we had *not*—we had no eels. I cannot think how people can eat such disgusting things!"

This was too much for Tim's philosophy.

"Oh my, Miss Constance!" he exclaimed, "in a pie they are beautiful;—ain't they, Master Edgar?"

Edgar could say little in favour of their beauty in any situation. He thought they

looked less like snakes in a pie than out of it; all he knew was, that it was good fun catching them. Tim might eat them all, for he owned it was no matter to him.

Hark ! the church clock !—Two o'clock ! How dim, and yet how distinct the sounds were wafted from the old tower ! They had been out more than an hour. Constance was beginning to feel cold. Edgar declared himself hungry. Tim began to be nervous lest the piece of candle in the lantern should not last till they got into the house. He knew by experience that it was neither easy nor pleasant to go to bed in the dark. They turned their steps homeward with one accord ; but they had enjoyed their expedition very much.

END OF VOL. II.

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CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

—

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CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.”

I do no fors, I speke right as I mene.
CHAUCER.

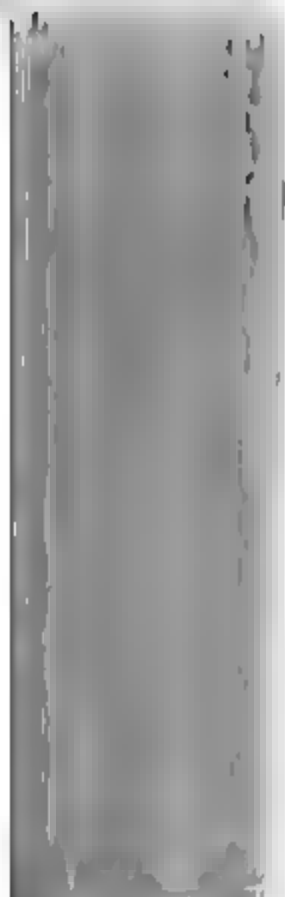
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1844.



101
Printed by Schulze at

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CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

CHAPTER I.

Sir, a whole history.

* * * * *

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba
That he should weep for her ?

HAMLET.

And thus when old affections are wore out
Or when their stream is broken by mischance,
Your heart will no more echo to their griefs
Than with a sad surprise, if they be sudden.

ANON.

“ At last ? ” said Mary, as she looked up
from her book.

“ Now this is what I call injustice,” said
Constance, sitting down beside her. “ I
have been with Mrs. Agatha to the school ;

then we went back to her cottage, and I was seized with a desire to dig up one of her flower beds, which I accomplished, much to her amusement; since which performance I have written three letters for papa, and here I am."

"By the bye," said Mary, "did you ever come to an understanding with Lord Bevis, how much you would allow him to serve your papa? I recollect our finding you in tears one—"

"Stop—stop;" said Constance, "I am quite ashamed of that morning, and I was nearly as silly when first he came hither. I was very cross one day because he had been reading Sophocles to papa—which I could not do if I wished it."

"And what was his defence? I suppose he made one."

"Yes. He said in that mournful way he has, that I had a thousand means of showing my love for my father; and that he trusted I should not be reluctant to grant him the power of proving how grate-

ful he was for his long and tried friendship."

"And you?"

"Oh! I cried."

"It certainly is very odd," said Mary, musing, "with one common interest, too—"

"That we have not made a match!" said Constance, laughing; "why, my dear Mary, we know each other's history—"

"Yes; but so does—" Mary stopped short.

"So does—oh! go on, dear."

"I was thinking of something else. So, my dear Constance, spare those skeins of silk, and let me help you to put the flower-stands in order."

"Ay, that reminds me," said Constance, running to the glass, "that my exploits may not have improved my toilet! What do you think, Mary, dear—shall I alter my costume?"

"Not unless you expect any particular visitor," returned Mary. "That soft white dress is a great favourite of mine, and by

some wonderful management on your part, you have contrived to escape all traces of your occupation."

Constance seemed a long time occupied in pulling off her gloves ; at last she looked up.

" Mary !"

" I thought something important was coming," returned her cousin.

" Were you ever a fool ?"

" Very often, I dare say."

" But I mean in—in—"

" In particular. Not that I know of. Bring me to confession on any one point, and I'll tell you."

" Why it is very silly, I know ; but I really could not help it. Sir Morgan was very civil at dinner yesterday, and I was thinking of something else—"

" Somebody else—yes," interposed Mary.

" So as I was going away, he asked me if I should be at home this morning."

" Well ?"

" I said, no !"

“That was plain, my dear, at any rate !”

“Do you think he will take the hint ?”

“I do not. He has too much at stake to be easily disconcerted.”

“Then what am I to do ?” asked Constance.

“Bide your time,” returned Mary ; “only taking care not to say no, until you are asked.”

“Of course not,” returned Constance, leaning from the window. “There is Lord Bevis in the flower garden. Lord Bevis ! will you bring me in some of that scarlet honeysuckle, and a whole handful of azalias, and two or three yellow briar roses, if you please ; and now, Mary, I will accept your offer about the flower stands.”

Lord Bevis soon made his appearance with the requisite blossoms ; and shortly after Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley came in. Mrs. D'Oyley sat on a sofa with her embroidery ; Mary joined her uncle, that she might read to him some passages in a book

which she thought would please him ; and Constance, after bringing her father two or three of her finest flowers, took her place at a marble table and began her task of arrangement. Lord Bevis, lounging in the depths of an easy chair, and playing indolently with a paper cutter, was watching her progress with great interest.

“What a great deal of coquetry there is in that occupation,” said Lord Bevis, after looking on for some time in silence.

“There is only one coquette in this house,” returned Constance, without raising her head, “and I am sorry to be obliged to say, that one is a man.”

“There never was so unjust an accusation, if it alludes to me,—since the days of—do help me to an illustration.”

“Shall I ask Mrs. Agatha for one?” said Constance. “I am sure the way you flirt with her every time she enters this house, is perfectly alarming.”

“Do you hear that, Miss Hilton?” asked Lord Bevis.

“Yes,” returned Mary, “but Constance manages those things so badly ! She ought to say all that behind your back ; but she will never be a woman of the world.”

“I have been told that before,” said Constance, stooping over her flowers.

Here a servant threw open the door with some unintelligible announcement. She did not turn round, but asked Lord Bevis what the man said.

“No, don’t move !” cried Lady Bohun, as she entered, “don’t stir a finger !—it is just so that I would have your portrait taken ;—pray agree with me, my dear Mrs. D’Oyley. I am sure, Mr. D’Oyley, you are already stronger than when you were among us. Miss Hilton, you were very tantalizing yesterday, not to join our party—there, you tiresome creature, you have spoiled the attitude ; but it was perfect, was it not, Captain Bohun ?”

Constance started, and blushed at his name, but he gave no direct reply to the

demand made on his complimentary powers; he merely came forward and hoped she was quite well.

"Quite well," she thanked him.

She left her flowers, and sat down beside Lady Bohun. Captain Bohun went to speak to Miss Hilton; and Constance noticed that he seemed very much amused, and Mary very energetic as the conversation proceeded.

"I have so much to tell dear Mr. D'Oyley about our new Bishop," said Lady Bohun, rising. "I will arrange with you about the Archery meeting before I go, you may be sure."

"I am sure you do not go before luncheon," returned Constance, "and let us remember to try that duet together."

"Of course," said Lady Bohun, "if I can persuade my cavalier to wait so long, —though on second thoughts I shall not consult him in the matter. I tried, as we came along, to make him confess what a

delightful change had taken place at Leyton since he was here last, but not a word could I extract from him."

Captain Bohun looked round at this mention of his impracticable nature, and Constance fancied that she could decypher the smile which passed over his features.

"No," she thought, "whatever might be his opinion, he would not tell her of it, for I know he does not like her;—but that is no reason why he should not come and talk to me." So she had recourse to Lord Bevis. "Now, do you mean to amuse me or not," she said, "because I shall go back to my flowers directly, if you have nothing to say."

"Bear in mind my unlucky sex," returned Lord Bevis. "I *have* nothing to say; but if I were a woman, that very circumstance would make me talk the faster."

"Oh! we are to have a quarrel then!" said Constance, quietly.

“I hope not ; let us change the subject. How is Mrs. Dickson ? I saw you walking in the direction of the school.”

“Not very well,” replied Constance. “She is fretting because her brother is out of employment ; and she has been making such demands on my sympathy ! I cannot understand that confiding system !”

“No,” said Lord Bevis, “I would not complain, unless I were quite sure of being pitied. But this is by no means a popular trait of character. People never will give you any sympathy, but they are very angry if you don’t ask them for it.”

“That is one of your Rochefoucault maxims,” returned Constance ; “but before I dispute it, tell me if you have tried Mary’s horse this morning ?”

“I did.”

“And you found him quiet ?”

“Perfectly—by this token, that as I rode past your windows, I tried to make him show off—in vain.”

“Do you hear that, Mary ? By t’

bye, I knew I had a note to write. Would you find me a seal, Lord Bevis ?”

“ Might I suggest that you have one on your finger ?”

“ True,” said Constance, laughing, as she drew off her ring ; “ by the bye, there is a long history attached to this seal, which I will tell you one day. There—did you ever know any body write so quickly as I do ?”

“ How much praise do you want, Miss D'Oyley ? Because I am quite ready to come forward with any amount.”

“ I shall come back to scold you,” cried Constance ; “ but I think Lady Bohun has finished her account of the Bishop, and I am so very anxious to try a shot with her before luncheon.”

“ Then I may go in search of your bow, and your guard, and your quiver, and tassel, wherever they may severally be ?”

“ War, war ! no peace ! is your motto this morning,” returned Constance ; “ but I will trouble you to collect my weapons,

and bring them out before the cedar tree on the lawn."

It so happened that Captain Bohun and Constance were the last to leave the room ; therefore they found themselves walking side by side along the lawn. The rest of the party were a little in advance.

" You seem already to be intimate with Lady Bohun," said her companion.

" Yes," returned Constance, " she has been very kind to me, and women form intimacies sooner than men."

A short silence followed; which was broken by Constance exclaiming in a tone of genuine admiration, as Lady Bohun turned and beckoned her to come on : " What a beautiful complexion she has !"

" Oh ! very," returned Captain Bohun, turning to examine a flower as he spoke, Constance fancied to conceal a smile.

" It is very odd now," she said, " that you men can never believe one woman in earnest when she praises another ; you pay me a particular compliment to suppose

I cannot admire a complexion ten times better than my own !”

For Constance, whose unpractised eye could readily detect the coarse powder that hung on the cheek of Lady Hernshaw, was quite ignorant of the more delicate cosmetics with which Lady Bohun refreshed her waning youth.

“ I believe you capable of every thing that is generous,” returned her companion.

“ Except in the present instance !” said Constance looking up and laughing. “ But what do you think of this lawn ? Lady Bohun has been advising me to cut a circle of flower-beds in the middle of it.”

“ Lady Bohun generally prefers art to nature,” said Captain Bohun quietly.

“ And what is your opinion on the subject ?”

“ I should hold it little short of sacrilege to disfigure this smooth turf. By the bye, I commend your choice of an archery

ground ; I suppose you have already made good progress in the use of the bow : you have an excellent example before you. Lady Bohun is, or was, famed throughout the county ; I believe she vanquished Sir Guy by her skill in archery, and—her complexion !”

“ But what an inducement that is !” cried Constance ; “ I wonder how soon I shall be enabled to try for a prize at the meeting ? Why there is Sir Morgan actually under the trees !—How in the world did you get in ? I said I was not at home.”

“ With such an inducement ;” exclaimed Sir Morgan, “ I could scale the walls of a convent to obtain a sight of you !”

“ But I really don't wish you to witness my awkward attempts at shooting,” said Constance ; “ I would rather you had come at any other time.”

“ It is impossible that you could be awkward.”

“ Yes I could, comparatively,” said Constance taking her bow from Lord Bevis. “ Now, find me a glorious arrow, one that will hit the bull’s eye.”

Lord Bevis walked over to the target and offered to hold a crown piece for her to aim at.

“ You know I will not,” cried Constance ; “ be so good as to move out of the way—farther—nearer the tree ! Now do look at him,” said she impatiently to Sir Morgan, “ I shall be sure to hit him ; ten to one I hit anything within three yards of that target !”

“ Have you not done that already ?” asked Sir Morgan in a low tone.

“ Oh ! you mean allegorically,” returned Constance fixing her arrow ; but she did not condescend to enter into any farther explanation of the subject.

The party shot, and laughed, and talked, until luncheon was announced. Sir Morgan overwhelmed Constance with praises of her grace and dexterity ; but, as she

CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

id, facts were stubborn things ; no compliments could conjure her arrows an inch nearer to the bull's eye. She had no doubt she looked very graceful, but the less people talked of her skill the better !

Sir Morgan disputed and argued, and appealed from one to another. Lady Bohun encouraged the conversation, and she was a clever talker. Lord Bevis teased Constance, and she in turn abused him, while Mary and Captain Bohun looked on like spectators at a play.

“ If you won't talk nonsense, you ought not to listen to it,” said Constance turning to Captain Bohun. “ It is dreadful to have one sitting by, measuring our folly ! Do oblige me by saying something very ridiculous.”

“ I should be so happy to obey you,” said Captain Bohun laughing ; “ but you know extremes are hard to hit : nonsense is really difficult.”

“ Oh ! if you respect our proceedings. I am satisfied,” said Constance ; “ I wa

afraid you might be looking down upon us."

"That is your post-bag I know," said Lady Bohun, as a servant brought it into the room. "Now if you don't open your letters directly, I shall order my carriage and fly; I hate the slightest suspense myself in such things—so give me a paper and let me look over the fashions."

"But I have no letters," said Constance; "it looks so undignified, so common, does it not, Sir Morgan? There is one for papa; I'll let you read it to him, Lord Bevis. I do think Harry might write a little oftener. How I envy you, Mary, with half a dozen sheets in your hand just as if you were a secretary of state!"

"Will you allow me to write to you, Miss D'Oyley!" exclaimed Sir Morgan.

"No," replied Constance; "I don't wish to play at having correspondents. I shall take up the Times, and tell you the latest intelligence from China."

She glanced down the columns for a few

moments, when on a sudden she clasped her hand over her forehead, and hastily left the room, dropping the newspaper as she went.

“I wish you would follow Miss D'Oyley,” said Captain Bohun to Mary, “I fear she is ill.”

“That cannot be,” said Mary; “Constance is not in the habit of falling ill on so slight a notice, she must have seen something to startle her in that paper. Give it me.”

Captain Bohun picked it up, and Mary commenced an eager search among its contents. “‘Recent disturbance at Canterbury. Frightful accident on the Birmingham Railway. Singular occurrence near Reading. Late thunderstorm.’ I do wonder now—oh! good Heaven!—look here. ‘Yesterday the —— Hotel, Southampton, was thrown into confusion by the death of — Forde Esq. late of Elmsforde in the county of Kent. The unfortunate gentleman terminated his existence by poi-

son, it is supposed, in consequence of the total derangement of his affairs. He was a junior partner in the house of Arkwright, Farner, and Co., of whose failure we gave notice in our journal of last week.' And then follow all the sickening details that belong to such matters. Stay—here is something, 'His young and lovely widow accompanied him from Paris, and remains at the Hotel in a very precarious condition, owing to the shock she experienced.' Frightful, is it not?"

"Altogether;—and that woman loose again!"

"What an odd idea! Now I must go to Lady Bohun and coin some falsehood to suit the occasion. Such are the necessities of our social state!"

"Will you not go first to your cousin?"

"No; for she would much rather be alone. Don't you see, this is ostensibly no business of her's, and therefore I can offer her no sympathy. She has a right

to be shocked, but no right to show it—you understand? My dear Lady Bohun, Constance is gone up stairs with a crushing headache : she offers a thousand excuses for leaving you with so little ceremony ; but she means to drive over and see you in a day or two, and challenge you to a farther trial of skill.”

Lady Bohun was distressed, Sir Morgan in despair ; but they ordered their several conveyances to depart.

Lady Bohun's last words referred to a certain mixture of white vinegar and water, an admirable specific for headaches ; and Sir Morgan rode off, with a fervent hope expressed to Mary, that her charming cousin might be able to assure him with her own lips on the morrow that she was perfectly recovered.

CHAPTER II.

By love's religion I must here confesse it,
The most I love, when I the least expresse it.

HERRICK.

My love is strengthened, though more weak in seeming,
I love not less, though less the show appear.
That love is merchandized whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish every where.

SHAKSPEARE.

Falseness cannot come from thee, for thou look'st
Modest as justice, and thou seem'st a palace
For the crown'd truth to dwell in.

IBID.

It was not in the nature of Constance to affect distress when she felt none, and though utterly shocked by the intelligence which so suddenly met her eye, she could not feel that the loss or the grief was

her's ; and her prevailing sense was a deep thankfulness that she had been prevented from uniting her fate with one, who had proved himself so much the sport of fortune as to terminate his life for a mischance, regarding only his pecuniary affairs.

She was very anxious to know the future lot of Isabel, and she had no means of conjecturing it. Mary could afford her no information, would not even guess. Mrs. D'Oyley was sure that Lady Hernshaw would hasten to Isabel directly she knew of her distress ; it was impossible to feel animosity at such a time. She was now with her mother, there could not be a doubt about it.

“Certainly not,” said Constance, “if every one resembled you, my dear mamma; but I cannot feel at all sure of it in the present instance.”

Mr. D'Oyley asked Constance what she would like to do. She did not know. Should she write to Lady Hernshaw to in-

quire after Mrs. Forde, or would her papa be so kind as to dictate a letter from himself?

Mr. D'Oyley seemed to hesitate a little. They were rather awkwardly placed ;—no one would suppose them earnestly anxious about her. Lady Hernshaw might take their inquiries as an insult ;—he asked Lord Bevis for his opinion.

Lord Bevis turned round, and met the eager, breathless gaze of Constance.

“ You know I must do something,” she said. “ I am not going to sit still, thinking that she is placed alone in such dreadful circumstances. I would go down to her myself, if I believed it ; I would not wait to see the sky fall, or Lady Hernshaw relent—which would be the same thing.”

“ It is not in your nature,” he replied. “ I am well aware that you must act. I think you had better write to Lady Hernshaw a mere letter of inquiry about her daughter ; you would be justified by your previous acquaintance in doing this, al-

though the way in which it terminated would seem to have put an end to your interest in her well-being."

Constance wrote as it was agreed. She hoped Lady Hernshaw would excuse the trouble to which she put her, in earnestly requesting to know how Mrs. Forde supported the afflicting trial through which she had lately passed.

It is difficult to say whether Constance or Mary was most desirous to know what Lord Bevis thought upon the subject that engrossed them all ; but he made no allusion to it ; he went on walking up and down the room, a common habit of his, and reading sometimes aloud, sometimes to himself, from a volume of the Faery Queene.

"Oh, read on ! read out that delicate description of Britomart," cried Mary ; "and confess, every body, that she exceeds every other heroine ever shadowed from the dreaming brain of poet or painter."

"You mean of course, that we under-

stand by a heroine a species of Amazon," said Lord Bevis, "for if you place her in competition with the divine Desdemona, or the peerless Imogen"—

"True," interrupted Mary, "you men don't allow any interference on our part with sword or lance. I was contrasting her in my own mind with Tasso's Clorinda, and thinking how very much more loveable, was the creation of our exquisite Spenser."

"But surely," said Lord Bevis, "you allow the death of Clorinda, both in the wording and circumstances, to be one of the most eloquent and touching passages in poetry. *Non morì già*—you recollect the lines."

"I agree to that," replied Mary; "but the magnificence of Clorinda, and she is a very dazzling vision, is not equalled by the transcendant purity of Britonart. Her dignity, her resolute heart, her delicate beauty; and above all, the most feminine, most ideal, most airy portrait of her gentle

love, make her to my mind the sweetest image of celestial womanhood in the whole range of fiction, though altogether, my dear Constance, a person not admired by the gentlemen : for a very clever writer of the other sex has observed that the ladies most in favour with men, are those who make themselves most eminently disagreeable to women."

"He who would endeavour to draw your character, Miss Hilton," said Lord Bevis, "would find no easy task to perform."

"But that would be a jest," said Mary laughing, "to the toil of the poor artist who should be set to represent my face. I shall never forget Rochard, my dear Constance, when I went with Eustace to sit to him—he did look so deplorably puzzled! He made a tolerable thing of Eustace, the miniature, you know, which Miss Meredith adored so much; but I made papa lock up mine, and thus spared

my vanity the sight of so doleful a countenance."

"Oh! make him draw your character!" exclaimed Constance pointing to Lord Bevis.

"It is not fair," returned Mary. "People don't like to be forced to speak unpleasant truths."

"No," said Lord Bevis; "though some people enjoy exceedingly to speak them without compulsion."

"The craniologists," said Mary, "will tell you that you possess, and cultivate every vice under Heaven, with a degree of coolness that the keenest ill-nature cannot always bestow."

"But," said Constance, "I must have you tell me about Britonart's love; you, who are almost an unbeliever in such matters, I should like to know what you call a becoming affection for a lady to encourage."

Lord Bevis looked at Miss Hilton, as

Constance spoke ; and she fancied as he passed her, (he was still pacing the room,) that he touched her hand. This was the first idea she entertained of their having any particular regard for each other, and she was delighted beyond measure. In the course of the morning Captain Bohun called. He, like Lord Bevis, made no allusion to the subject that was uppermost in all their thoughts. Constance wondered whether they were really as devoid of curiosity as they seemed to be. However, the conversation became general and interesting, and the very rainy morning passed quickly. There were books to be discussed, and prints to be looked at, and silks to be tangled, as Constance told Lord Bevis, as well as new music to be tried.

“ And poor Mary is sitting watching the clouds all this time,” said Constance, “ in the vain hope that she will be able to ride this evening. Come away from the window,

Mary ; don't torment yourself with looking at that leaden sky."

"The clouds are floating," said Lord Bevis ; "it will clear up at sunset."

"So I think," said Mary.

"And do you mean to ride, Miss D'Oyley?" asked Captain Bohun.

"If the evening prove fine. I don't mean, like Mary, to gallop through a Scotch mist."

"You don't know the pleasure of it;" said Mary.

"If you wore curls, you would at least acknowledge the inconvenience," returned Constance. "But you are such a desperate horsewoman!"

"*You* are improving, Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis.

"Oh, now! don't patronise me!" exclaimed Constance. "How I do wish I could find anybody who would praise me thoroughly! The idea of anybody wanting to improve!"

"No ; because
he says," she rep
his speeches into
young woman,' t
common sort of b
father to boast of
you a very prett
fore I am your l
mand.'"

"Till death ?"

"No !" replied
riage."

"That is, if pe
period, is it not ?"

"Much more,"
ing. "But then,
11. 6. 11. 11.

“He will be here presently,” said Lord Bevis.

“Never believe it,” returned Constance. “He will not trust his precious person through the rain, because he is quite sure, that at any moment I shall be ready to fall down at the feet of that cross-barred coat of arms he is so proud of.”

“Fancy quartering your bezants and banners upon that lattice work of his!” said Mary laughing.

“No, after all, we should not jest about it,” said Constance; “because when a man asks for your property, he does you a great favour; and as to Sir Morgan, he has not done that yet, and most likely never will.”

Captain Bohun did not seem at all embarrassed by the terms upon which he found Constance and Lord Bevis. Whether he understood them rightly, or whether it was no longer an object of interest to him, how Constance felt to-

wards others, she could not tell. He certainly remained as long as he possibly could for a morning visit, and certainly she thought, contributed very much to its pleasure. As he rose to take leave, he said that the rain prevented Lady Bohun from calling to inquire after Constance, and she deputed him to express her good wishes and anxiety for her recovery.

"Thank you," said Constance looking up at him in some wonder; "pray tell Lady Bohun I am quite well."

"My cousin's headache has left her entirely," said Mary.

"I saw some bad news suddenly," returned Constance in a steady voice. "Lady Bohun may know that I did. But the bad news might have been a great deal worse." She said the last few words as if to herself.

"Oh! Constance," said Mary, "(the old story!) you will never be a woman in the world!"

Captain Bohun said nothing that con

be interpreted by Constance into any expression of feeling or regard ; but the look he gave her as he took his leave, made it difficult to believe that he had ceased to care for her.

CHAPTER III.

Fair is my love, but not so fair as fickle.

Mild as a dove, but neither true nor trusty.

SHAKSPEARE.

A mother said you ? I forgot your claim

To her obedience, as you left undone

Your task of love, of warning, of control,

Your high and difficult mission, all undone.

ANON.

“AND what does Eustace say ?” asked Constance as she leaned against the window, and knew by the singular scribble of the letter Miss Hilton held in her hand that it was from her brother.

“Says—oh ! that he cannot come,” replied Mary.

“Does he condescend to give a rea-

son for the impossibility?" asked Constance.

"Not any. Is it not singular, my dear Constance," said Mary after a pause, "that a girl without a single merit, by the force of simple flattery, broad flattery, such as a woman would shrink from with disgust, should be able thus to achieve her ends?"

"It is strange," said Constance; "and Captain Bohun thinks him very shrewd."

"So he is, remarkably," replied Mary; "but show me the man, Constance, who is shrewd where his own vanity is concerned! All the blindness of love, which is a fable; and of selfishness, which is a disease; and of folly, which is a fault; and all the physical blindnesses which are attacked by the faculty, fall short of the enormous blindness engendered by a man's vanity."

"I am very sorry for you, dear," began Constance.

"No, don't be," returned Mary; "I

always thought he would marry some inferior person. Like most men of his capacity and habits, he would be horror-struck at the idea of a woman possessing any useful or noble qualities. She must be as nearly as possible a Mahomedan in point of education, except, that instead of the modest seclusion imposed upon the women of that persuasion, she should be exposed to the impertinent and calculating scrutiny of as many men as can conveniently be brought together on every occasion."

Constance laughed at this description; and Mary went on.

"Although, Constance," said Mary, "if you had been less honest and less odd, I believe you might have bestowed on him a worthy wife without his consent. He would have taken you, not *for* your virtues indeed, but in despite of them, as is the case I do think whenever a good woman marries. Yes, it is very pretty in you

to disclaim it ; I only know that Eustace said to me in a very doleful manner the day before he left Hillsted, 'I don't believe that Constance would have me, if I were to ask her even.' "

Constance could not help laughing at the remarkable penetration her cousin had evinced in coming to this conclusion ; but she disclaimed, more vehemently than before, all chance on her part of coming in for a share of his thousands upon thousands.

As the matter is not of much importance, it may be as well to mention here, that the admiration of Mr. Eustace Hilton for Miss Meredith went on in the usual way. She was a nice girl, and a fine creature, and a lovely woman, and an angel in due progression ! She worked him a cigar case, and he gave her a bracelet, and then wrote an incoherent letter to his father to beg his consent to their marriage. The consent his father flatly refused ; and as that involved the probable refusal of certain

needful sums of money, it was rather more conclusive than it might otherwise have been. There was a little talk about constancy between the young people, and then, there came to the house where Miss Meredith was staying, a very silly lord, who was richer than Eustace was ever likely to be. Miss Meredith transferred her flattery and affections to the new comer, and explained to Eustace that she should ever be wretched without his father's consent to their engagement, and that she felt it an imperative duty to break it off. This assurance was supported by the sight of another cigar-case which she was embroidering for the young lord. For three whole days Eustace was very uncomfortable. He ate and drank much more than usual at dinner, rode a fine horse almost to pieces, and filled up his leisure moments by abusing his servants. These salutary methods dissipated his vexation in due time; and he was quite ready to fall love with the next amiable young la

who might cross his path. Miss Meredith did not succeed with the rich lord ; but perseverance is generally rewarded sooner or later ; and there is little doubt that between the years of twenty and forty her efforts were crowned with some sort of a husband.

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And many days passed on, without bringing any answer to the appeal which Constance had addressed to Lady Hershaw. They did not, however, pass so slowly or so anxiously as might have been expected. Captain Bohun was constantly in her society, and she did not conceal from herself that he contributed to her happiness. He never spoke of the subject that occupied her ; but he rode every day to the post town to bring her letters, a little earlier than she would have received them by the hands of the village postman. But for this attention, she might have thought he had forgotten the name or the position

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that Miss D'Oyley should have waited so long for tidings of Mrs. Forde ; but the delay was owing to Lady Hernshaw's absence from home. She encloses all the letters she has received from Mrs. Forde, as the best information in her power to afford to Miss D'Oyley's obliging inquiries."

" And this was the mother of Isabel !"

Constance shocked and startled, burst into a passion of tears ; and as soon as she could command her voice, gave Lady Hernshaw's letter to Captain Bohun to read.

" Could you believe it ?" she said.

" Very easily of Lady Hernshaw," he replied. " But I am very deeply grieved to see you so much distressed."

" Oh ! never mind me ; think of Isabel !" said Constance in her usual straightforward manner ; and half blinded by her tears she perused one letter after another : one earnest entreaty for a mother's presence,

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very worthy of the mother. As for him, not a day passed that he did not thank Heaven for the escape he had had !

“ And yet,” said Mary, “ from the tone of resentment in which you always speak of her, it is evident to me that you never loved her, or, that you love her still.”

Whatever truth this remark might contain, it was clear that Captain Bohun was annoyed by it. He made no reply, and took up a book as if to conceal some embarrassment.

“ At any rate,” said Mary, after a pause, “ one Constance is worth a thousand Isabels.”

She spoke unconsciously, and was sorry the moment afterwards that she had said any thing so marked.

“ A thousand !” exclaimed Captain Bohun throwing his book on the table, “ she is the most beautiful and truthful piece of nature ever created !”

At this moment her quick footstep was

heard across the hall, and Constance entered in great haste.

"It is all settled, Mary," she cried, "I am going down to Isabel directly: papa says I may. Captain Bohun, don't go away, you cannot be quite without interest in the matter. You will be glad to know, that Isabel is not wholly deserted."

"I cannot want interest in any thing that concerns you," returned Captain Bohun.

"And, Lord Bevis," said Constance turning as he entered; "upon my word I take it very unkind of you never to say a word for me when I had set my heart upon going, and a syllable from you would have settled it; papa thinks so much of your opinion. But it does not matter, I go at last."

"As I could not offer to escort you," said Lord Bevis, "I thought it better to be quiet."

"I am sure I hope you will not run away and leave papa, just because I am bringi

home Isabel ; for I will bring her," said Constance.

" I should find it very difficult to leave this place," returned Lord Bevis, without raising his head from the book that lay before him.

" And you mean to bring this lady to your house !" said Captain Bohun. " I may, without offending you, say that she has once disturbed its peace ; is it just to yourself to incur a second risk ?"

" I do not bring her to live with me always," returned Constance : " that might please none of us ; but she shall have the shelter of my roof until she finds one of her own. She was my friend, and I part very slowly from such ties. I do not know how she can injure me now ; but there are better things than happiness, even in this world."

" And who goes with you ?" asked Lord Bevis.

" You may well ask. Mamma could not, and I would not let papa, now that quiet is

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rather than ornamental? Whereas if you listen to the married ladies retailing all the witty rubbish of their darlings, or fighting their way over again through all their ailments, it is impossible to deny that a well informed single woman is far more fitted to play her part in society than those favoured beings called wives."

"My evidence would go for nothing," said Mary smiling; "your's, my dear Constance, may do them some good."

"We have been praising you, Mrs. Agatha, to the very echo," said Lord Bevis.

"Many thanks;" said Mrs. Agatha. "Now my dear, are you ready?"

"The very quickest and the very kindest creature in the world!" exclaimed Constance. "I will only make my adieus to papa and mamma, and lose no more time."

Their journey passed without anything worthy of comment. Mrs. Agatha was an intelligent and conversable person, and

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same with regard to character, as with the physical powers : years which bring so many burdens to the body, bring strength or weakness to the soul accordingly as they have been used. And though I believe the love of virtue grows, yet patience grows with it, and the faults and weaknesses of our nature are more gently regarded than in the impatient and disdainful spirit of youth."

"Don't you think," said Constance after a pause, "that Mary and Lord Bevis are becoming very great friends?"

"I am very glad to think so, my dear," said Mrs. Agatha, "for it would be hardly possible to select a wife with so much reasonable chance of happiness. He has seen nothing of the world, and does not wish to extend his knowledge of it. Miss Hilton has seen too much; and is more willing to relinquish society than he could expect any woman of her age and advantages to be. For you, my dear, when first I became acquainted with you both, I


rather wished the match. But you have and ought to have, the world before you; you should not become the wife of a recluse. You must find some man upon whose character you can rely, and whose tranquillity of temper would be a relief to your more animated spirits."

Constance laughed, but turned her head from her companion. She could not fail to realise her description.

There is something pleasant and exciting to your novice in travelling, in coming to an inn at the end of a journey. Something in the strange room and hasty meal, and the glimpse into the street, or the half cultivated garden, possesses a charm to those who have not shared very largely in the stimulus of novelty.

Constance enjoyed it all. She thought the tea service pretty, and the balcony filled with fresh though common flowers, delightful. She could sit upon the sill of the French window, so completely screened by

the tall myrtles and geraniums, that there was nothing shocking in her position. It enabled her to look into the broad street and watch the lamps slowly kindled, and the glitter of the lighted shops, and the quick moving carriages and foot-passengers. As she was passing the time in this manner, she was not a little startled to see Captain Bohun quietly walking up the street in the direction of her hotel. She certainly thought at first that her eyes had deceived her, but as he passed lamp after lamp, revealing distinctly his very features, she became certain that whatever cause had brought him to Southampton, there he was. She turned very pale ; but there was no light in the room to betray her change of complexion, and Mrs. Agatha went on gently discoursing as if her listener's soul was absorbed in the history of the Dutch clock which Constance had presented to the village school, and which lost ten minutes a day, until the nephew of the



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to see her, (Constance was sure of that,) yet the moment she was free, he hastened to breathe the air that surrounded her, and to watch, though at a distance, over her welfare. His hesitation in naming her, his resentment when the subject was entered upon, were so many signs of an attachment which his reason reproved, but which his heart could not forget. She could ascribe no blame to him at any rate ! His conduct to her had been marked by no injustice, no duplicity ; his offer had been distinctly rejected, and he was free to select the terms on which they were to meet for the future. She had begun, just a little, to mistake them ; but she understood him in time : she could now meet and part as strangers should, yet she could not avoid musing on his repeated warning. Isabel, she felt, was again to disturb her peace ; yet not for that would she refrain from extending to her her warmest protection at a time that she was deserted by the world. And so dream-

ing of the past and the future, she sat till it was time to retire for the night, while Mrs. Agatha who guessed that her thoughts were painfully wandering, took good care not to disturb her meditations.

CHAPTER IV.

Ay Jovino !

Ay amigo ! ay de mi ! Tu solo a un triste,
 Leal, confidente en su miseria extrema,
 Eres salud y suspirado puerto,
 En tu fiel seno de bondad dechado
 Mis infelices lágrimas se vierten
 Y mis querellas sin temor, piadoso
 Las oye y mezcla con mi llanto el tuyo.

D. JUAN MELENDEZ VALDES.

It was with the utmost impatience that Constance waited Mrs. Agatha's return from the hotel where Mrs. Forde was staying. She came back looking tired and distressed ; but she did not for that reason withhold her tidings, like Juliet's nurse of famous memory. Mrs. Forde was, she said, extremely weak—very much •

agitated, but most thankful to hear that Constance had come to her assistance. She could hardly believe it at first, and was penetrated with gratitude when she became convinced that it was the case. She had been very ill, indeed for some days her life had been despaired of; but she was now sufficiently recovered to return at once with Constance. She appeared to be quite ignorant of the state of her pecuniary affairs; and the sooner they were intrusted to a man of business the better, Mrs. Agatha thought, that she might know what she had to depend upon—suspense being the worst of all evils.

“And you know, Mrs. Agatha,” said Constance; “I brought money with me, so that she might have no difficulty on that score in leaving the place directly.”

“Yes my dear,” said Mrs. Agatha, “she will be better for leaving the place. It has become terrible to her, and the daily uncertainty she has suffered has

made it worse. I never saw a person less fitted to combat the ills of life. She had formed no plan, anticipated no future ; but sat down in a chaos of misery, to be relieved, or to die—as it might happen.”

“ The result of a false education !” said Constance ; “ but, dear Mrs. Agatha, did you tell her all about Leyton ?”

No, in the hurry and excitement of her interview, Mrs. Agatha had entered into no relation of the changes that had taken place in her friend's fortunes.

It had been agreed between them that her visit should follow fast upon the preparatory one paid to Isabel by Mrs. Agatha, so the above account was hardly concluded before she was dressed, and on her way.

She traversed the few streets she had to pass with such a rapid step, that Mrs. Agatha could scarcely keep pace with her ; but when she found herself at the door of the hotel, she paused for breath as much from her overwrought feelings as from the haste she had made. She heard Mrs.

Agatha ask for Mrs. Forde, she followed mechanically the waiter who showed them through the straggling passages ; and when at length he stopped and threw open a door, she took courage, entered suddenly, and found herself in the presence of her friend.

The room was shabby and melancholy, with a garish red paper that looked hot and angry in the noon of a summer's sun, a forlorn abode for the solitary and beautiful creature who lay, in the utmost state of exhaustion and weakness, upon a clumsy black horse-hair sofa opposite the door.

To have seen her in one of the wretched hovels painted by Crabbe, would have been less repugnant to her graceful nature, than when surrounded by the vulgar and dreary discomfort of a second-rate inn.

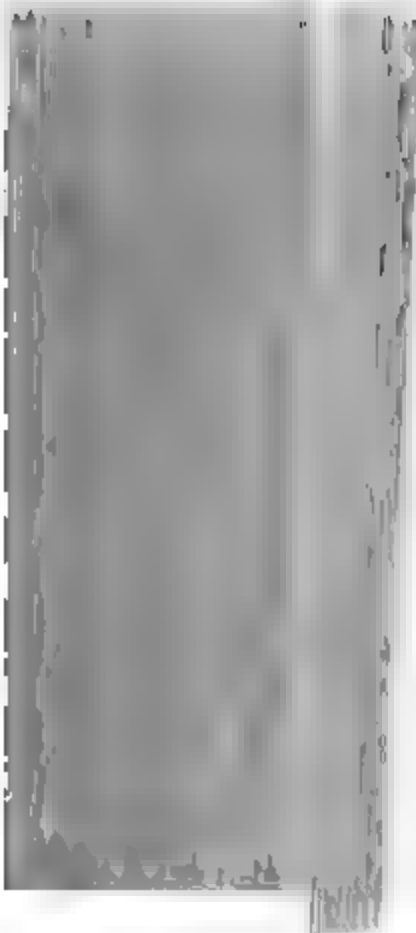
Constance was prepared, by all Mrs. Agatha had told her, to find a great alteration in Isabel ; but she was not prepared for the devastation which her violent and

sudden grief had wrought upon her countenance.

She was not so very much wasted ; and but for the colourless cheek, was not whiter than the marble paleness of complexion habitual to her. It was in the languid half-lifeless expression of her eye and form that the change lay.

Isabel did not rise from the sofa, but held out her hand and said in a faint voice : “ Constance, I should be ashamed to meet you, but for all this misery—”

Her voice was scarcely audible, but she did not shed a tear. Constance was in a moment by her side, clasping her to her breast and weeping passionately. They were reconciled—they were friends again. There was no need of words to express and explain the feelings of their hearts. Constance had long forgiven the past, and as she looked upon the fragile creature who lay half senseless in her arms, she renewed her silent resolve that she would shelter and protect her as warmly as if no



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" We don't live a
said Constance ; "

complete exhaustion that she seemed to have no curiosity about anything. Mrs. Agatha made the tea and distributed the refreshments to her young charges in perfect silence. She was an admirable companion, for she possessed a ready sympathy for the moods of others, which is one of the rarest virtues to be met with on this side of Heaven.

She insisted on their going to bed very early, and would not allow Constance to stay and talk with her, as she had a great inclination to do.

They began their journey rather late the next morning, on Mrs. Forde's account ; and performed it in the same quiet manner. Isabel, leaning her head on her friend's shoulder, sat tranquil to all appearance, but quite silent ; content to stop for rest or refreshment where Constance desired it, but asking nothing, and rarely lifting her eyes to observe any passing object.

She never seemed to notice the handsome carriage they were travelling in, although she might have recollected that the D'Oyleys never had possessed such an appendage in their lives.

They were to reach Leyton late in the evening, and for a summer's night it was unusually dark. Isabel noticed nothing as the lodge-gates were thrown open, and they wound up the majestic avenue.

Constance felt her heart beat faster and faster as they neared the house; she could scarcely define her feelings. I believe they were not altogether free from the image of Captain Bohun. Edgar's voice was the first sound that welcomed her home.

"Here they are! I knew it. Didn't I say so, papa?" he cried running down the steps, as the carriage drew close up to the door, "There's Constance!—take care, dear, of the step—here's my arm!"

"It is so dark, Edgar dear," said Constance, "that I cannot see you at all."

There were tears in her voice, to use a French expression, but she spoke cheerfully.

Lord Bevis came down the steps in silence and offered her his arm.

“And you, are you well?” said she, “but pray take care of dear Isabel, she is wearied to death.”

She conducted Isabel, with the assistance of Lord Bevis, into the hall; and hastily receiving the welcome of her father and mother, insisted on taking her friend up at once to the room prepared for her.

“She is so very tired, mamma,” she urged, taking Isabel from Mrs. D'Oyley's gentle embrace. “Please to give me that candle, Lord Bevis.”

Isabel, who was leaning heavily on Constance, started at the name, and raised her eyes to his.

He was standing much as when she saw him first, with a large cloak thrown across his shoulder in the Spanish manner, as pale as agitated, and gazing on her as earnestly,

crossed her mind,
from the radiant air
from the carriage a
pose with a smile!

She cast a hurried
magnificent hall with
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Lord Bevis to her, a

"Constance! you

Constance blushed
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We will have a long and quiet talk as soon as it is good for you. Here, Lord Bevis, you may take this cumbrous cardinal of mine, which is only in the way of my helping Isabel, and take care to give Mrs. Agatha some tea before I come down stairs ; if anybody waits for me, I will never forgive them."

As she spoke, she led Isabel gently up stairs, and insisted on helping her to undress. She brought her, with her own hands, such refreshments as she could prevail on her to take, and sat beside her with the intention of watching her until she fell asleep.

"You will not let me ask you any questions," said Isabel, "until to-morrow ; but I cannot think how it all is. Lord Bevis here, and your blush, Constance, ah ! he will be very happy !"

"I hope he will, dear Isabel," said Constance ; "but I have no intention of making him so. This house is mine, and most glad I am to welcome you to it, as heartily,

bid you good !
Dream-land till
know as much a
us all !”

“ Oh ! papa,
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CHAPTER V.

Love, controller of all hearts and eyes,
Awakener of new wills, and slumbering sympathies.

CRABBE.

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,
For they in thee a thousand errors note ;
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise.

SHAKSPEARE.

How can it? Oh! how can love's eye be true,
That is so vexed with watching and with tears!

IBID.

WHEN Constance retired for the night, her cousin Mary followed her into her room. The cousins embraced each other, and then Mary addressed to her some common place inquiries respecting her journey and some more particular ones concerning Mrs. Forde.

“ You have done a very generous thing without knowing it, dear Constance,” said Mary, taking her seat in one of the arm chairs by the fire-place ; “ you remind me of good M. Jourdan’s profound unconsciousness of his prosaic powers. The result of your experiments I regret that I cannot stay to witness, for here is a summons from papa to proceed immediately to London : you know his resolves are always sudden, and he thinks I have been absent from him long enough.” She held out an open letter as she spoke.

“ And I have not a word to say, much as I wish you here,” said Constance glancing over the letter, “ because uncle Hilton has really spared you very quietly all this time ; but I should be very glad of another fortnight ; and you will miss Lady Bohun’s archery meeting.”

“ Oh ! I can bear that,” said Mary smiling.

“ Yes, I forget that these festivals are not so fresh to you as to me,” replied Constance, “ oh ! if you could have staid

till it is all over with papa—but that I never hoped, so it is not a disappointment exactly.”

“ You will be sure to write to me on the very day,” said Mary, “ though I have no fears ; it is certain to succeed, everything is in uncle D'Oyley's favour : the tranquillity of his mind, the repose of his life, and a certain active little daughter who takes from him all care and responsibility. Ah ! Constance, your fortune came at the right time.”

“ And he does so enjoy Lord Bevis being here ?” said Constance. Mary rose from her chair, and began examining the ornaments on the chimney piece. She took up one Dresden shepherdess after another, and seemed to be inspecting their costume with the most minute attention.

“ I wonder,” said she, and then she began examining another shepherdess.

“ Yes, dear,” said Constance ; and she rose in her turn, and began to turn over

the china toys, as if she had never seen them before.

"I wonder very much," said Mary, "if my uncle and aunt ever thought, that you and Lord Bevis, being engaged much in one common cause, attending on your father, would become attached to each other."

"What they thought, I cannot say," returned Constance, "because people's thoughts are so very odd at times; but nothing was ever more improbable. Why, we became good sociable friends the very first day he came down."

"Because—" and here Mary had recourse to the chain of her eye-glass, which she drew through her fingers for some time in profound silence.

Talk of the bashfulness with which a young girl reveals her love, what is it to the confusion of a woman, who thinks herself too old to have any business with such feelings?

Constance felt a little mischievous—she would not say any thing to help her.

“In fact, dear,” said Mary suddenly, “when this letter came, Lord Bevis took occasion to make me an offer, and I—accepted him.”

“Of course, dear,” said Constance, throwing her arms round her cousin; “do you think I did not expect it?”

“He wished to follow me at once to London,” said Mary, “and then return to your father; but I made him understand that he had no business to think at all about me till uncle D'Oyley was quite recovered; and so that is settled. But I have many fears, many misgivings.”

“You! is it possible?” exclaimed Constance. “I do not think a woman can wish for a more sincere, a more amiable disposition than his; and how he ever came to appreciate one so suitable to his own, will be my wonder to the end of time, seeing that people generally select the very indi-

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“Then your uncertainties come back to Lord Bevis after all!” said Constance.

“I am half ashamed of them,” replied her cousin; “but you know how he loved that fatal creature; and now she comes among us again—this Isabel—and you and I—” and here Mary leaned her head on the mantel-piece, and fairly burst into tears.

“Courage then, Mary, and let him go!” exclaimed Constance, drawing herself up to her full height. “But recollect, that her spells once broken will never unite again, at least in the hearts of those who are really worth the having; and she poor girl—she is past all art, in power, and I hope in will, now. Those who seek her will do so in compassion and renewed love for her beauty and helpless condition; but Lord Bevis will not be the man, and I know him better than you do, take my word for it. So, that we may not stay talking till dawn, let me, if you please, turn you out of the room.”

Mary could not help smiling.

“ You are undoubtedly a heroine, Constance,” she said, as she took up her candle, “ and I am so much ashamed of my folly, that I dare not look you in the face; but please to recollect that with all my suitors, I have never had a lover before.”

Constance was first in the breakfast room the next morning. Then came Edgar, then followed Lord Bevis in his usual *laissez aller* manner.

“ Quite recovered from your fatigue, I see !” was his remark, as he shook hands with her.

“ Now, begging your pardon, I am particularly tired this morning,” replied Constance, “ and was expecting a little condolence from you.”

“ I am very sorry,” said Lord Bevis, “ but really you ought not to look so well, if you wish to excite compassion.”

“ Do I ?” said Constance, coolly surveying herself in the glass. “ True, I have rather a provoking colour, arising I sup-

pose, from want of sleep. Is there any news this morning? No, don't, pray, hand the paper to me, because I cannot read a newspaper; I only wished to be convinced that in all those four sheets, there is really not a particle of news. Stay, is not that papa's step?"

She looked so very lovely when she listened, it seemed to give new life to her whole person, and her's was a countenance which emotion always ennobled.

"Mr. A—— is so sanguine, I have no fears," said she, quite unconscious at the moment that she was not alone. "His sight is worse daily, yesterday he could not distinguish his watch, he will soon be totally blind." She stopped, for she saw a mournful smile on the face of her companion. A pang of terror so acute as to deprive her for the moment of speech and breath, shot through her heart.

"I assure you," said he, interpreting her look of distress, "I am as sanguine as Dr. A—— can be. I did but think, when you

life."

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“I always feel a sense of dismay, when I see a lady busy, which is all the advance I have made as yet to good breeding.”

“Do you wish to be contradicted?” asked Constance. “I certainly cannot let you help me, because I am fond of the affair of breakfast-making; a sort of important, fussy dignity is attached to the dispensing of tea and coffee.”

“How is—Mrs. Forde,” said Lord Bevis pronouncing the last two words very quickly.

Before she could reply, her cousin Mary entered. Constance thought she looked very much as if she had passed a sleepless night, her raven hair contrasting more strongly than usual with the pure paleness of her cheeks.

Lord Bevis manœuvred her into the chair next himself, and exchanged a few remarks with her in rather a low tone. But if any body wishes to be sentimental, they should not have a great boy at table with them!

"I say, Constance," cried Edgar, across the table, "next time you buy a horse, just wait till I'm in the way, will you? I don't half like that chesnut you talk of riding."

"Don't you, dear!" returned Constance, "perhaps you will have the kindness to send the toast down this way."

"Who knows when Captain Bohun will come here again?" continued Edgar, looking round. "I have seen nothing of him these two days."

Constance felt the colour mounting into her cheeks, but she made no answer.

"I don't know indeed, my dear," said Mr. D'Oyley; "he talked of bringing me a volume of Dugdale, so perhaps he may be over here this morning; but I think some one said, he had gone out for a day or two."

"You see, Edgar," said Mary, looking up suddenly, "that Captain Bohun does not come here to visit *me*."

Edgar looked from one to another, and then began to laugh to himself.

"Because," said he, "when he had a

little recovered from his paroxysm, "Tim and I have found such a splendid stream for trouting. You know the chalk cliff, which drops so suddenly from the high road, and the hollow filled with mountain ash and yew trees ; well, deep in the ground, there runs such a clear stream, bubbling over broken bits of rock, and farther on it gets a little wider, and the hawthorns grow right across it. You can't throw a fly very well there, but just drop your line along one of those rocky stones ; there is always a trout hiding. Tim and I caught three beauties the first day you were gone. If Captain Bohun had stept in that day, I would have taken him with us."

Having delivered this long narration, Edgar wound up by calling Captain Bohun a nice sort of a fellow, and helping himself bountifully to dried salmon.

And now breakfast was over, and the carriage at the door. Every body was sorry that Mary was going ; her even spirits were invaluable in a family circle ;

and, with an apparent indolence of manner, it was quite wonderful how much she did in the course of a day. She would read with her uncle, and angle with Edgar, and chat with Constance, and drive with her aunt, and call on Mrs. Agatha to teach her some new mystery in knitting, and play chess with Lord Bevis, and write half a dozen letters in the odd intervals of waiting to ride, or going upstairs to take off her bonnet, or any spare minute that nobody thought of turning to account; and all with such a total want of effort in her manner, that people forgot by night that she had been actively employed all the day.

"Come, Edgar, my boy, have a little mercy on your cousin," said Mr. D'Oyley, as Mary stood entering upon her tablets the different commissions with which Master Edgar had charged her. "Half these things would be just as well procured at H——."

"No, no my dear uncle," said Mary,

“there is a magic in any thing that comes from London to those who live in the country. His flies will catch more fish, and his arrows will go straighter to the mark; and his new bridle will possess some charm hitherto unknown—will keep his pony from shying, perhaps! No more commands? Then good by to all. How soon, Constance, shall we all meet again?”

But Constance was in tears and did not answer; and she was still standing alone in the deserted room, when Lord Bevis having seen Mary to the carriage, and the carriage out of sight, came back and roused her from her fit of musing.

“Miss D'Oyley,” said he, holding out his hand, “wish me joy, won't you?”

CHAPTER VI.

Ceder l'amato oggetto
Nè spargere un sospiro,
Sarà virtù, l'ammiro ;
Ma non la curo in me.

ATTILIO REGOLO.

Here will I seat myself, beside this old
Hollow and weedy oak, which ivy-twine
Clothes as with net-work :

Unheard, unseen,
And listening only to the pebbly brook
That murmurs with a dead, yet tinkling sound,
Or to the bees, that in the neighbouring trunk
Make honey-hoards.

COLERIDGE.

It was some days before Constance could prevail on Isabel to venture down stairs. The physician gave it as his decided opinion that she should endeavour to exert herself ; that she should mix with the

family, take air and exercise, and try by employment to get rid of her dejection. But she shrank from appearing to any one, with a natural reluctance that Constance strove in vain to combat. The day after her return Captain Bohun called at the door to inquire after Miss D'Oyley, and left the book which he had promised to her father. Since that time she had heard nothing of him. She endeavoured as much as possible to banish him from her thoughts; but she never looked on Isabel without bringing him to her recollection. At this moment, however, she was occupied in enticing her to come down for a few moments — only into her little morning room.

This was a favourite sitting-room of her's, in which, with its Tudor window filled with stained glass, and looking into the quaint flower garden, she usually spent the early part of the morning. It was the only room she had refurnished, and it had been a great delight to her to fit it up with all the

old carved oak chairs and cabinets that she could procure far and near.

Having led her in triumph into this sanctum, she was not a little annoyed to find Lord Bevis waiting her arrival;—not that it was forbidden ground to him, but that she did not at that time particularly wish for his company.

She advanced hurriedly with Isabel, with a gesture as if she were going to introduce her. But Lord Bevis interrupted her. Taking Isabel's hand from her's, he said, very gently, and without the slightest appearance of agitation:

“No, this is not our first meeting—I saw Mrs. Forde the other night, remember. I am very glad,” he added, addressing himself to Isabel, “that you have gained a little strength in the last few days;—indeed, you have so careful and kind a nurse that you must make haste to get well in common justice to her exertions.”

“In common gratitude—” Isabel began, but she could not complete her sentence;

tears trembled in her eyes, and she leaned her head back against the chair in which he had placed her, with an air of languor and extreme dejection.

Lord Bevis then hastened to explain his intrusion, as he called it ; which was merely to offer Constance a casket of black oak very curiously carved, which had belonged to Queen Mary ;—in proof whereof he pointed to the pomegranates carved on the lid and sides of the lock, which that Princess had assumed among her armorial bearings on her marriage with Philip of Spain. Constance was highly delighted with this addition to her antiquities, and having expressed her thanks, and then banished him from the room, she returned to Isabel.

She drew her chair close to the open window ; and they both sat silent for some time, looking at the dark masses of trees that skirted the garden, and the bright beds of summer flowers, enjoying the soft breeze that now and then wafted in the

scent of the jessamine that hung in thick clusters over the casement.

"And you will not try to come down this evening, Isabel?" said Constance; "we are quite alone."

"You never are *quite* alone, dear," replied Isabel, in those faint tones which had now become habitual to her.

"I am sure, unless it were Captain Bohun who might happen to come in—" said Constance, hesitating.

Isabel's face became dyed with blushes in a moment.

"I had rather meet any one else," she faltered.

"I do believe, dear Isabel," said Constance, earnestly, "I do believe that man is the cause of all your misfortunes."

"Not altogether," said Isabel; "but had I been quite fancy free, I should not perhaps have contemplated with such horror my marriage with Lord Bevis. Surely he is very much altered now, or I am changed greatly. I thought he would be

jealous, and you know how wild he used to look, and I felt sure he would murder me. You may smile, and so can I now at such a fancy ; but then it haunted me with all the ghastly distinctness of a dream. I used to fancy myself alone with him in his old Welsh castle, and I have almost perished with fright, picturing to myself that he would destroy me in some fit of jealous rage. If Captain Bohun had come forward then, and there was nothing to hinder it, nothing but the change in his own feelings: what a difference it would have made to both of us !”

Constance could not find out that she particularly wished for that difference, but she fully acquiesced in the remark.

“ Some people have a great deal to answer for ;” said Isabel.

Constance sighed.

“ I don’t mean to exculpate myself,” said Isabel ; “ but if mamma had dealt honestly between me and the only man I

ever cared for, I should have been a happy, perhaps a good woman."

"You can be good now, dear Isabel," said Constance gently.

"Oh Constance!" said Isabel rousing suddenly from her languor, and speaking with great earnestness; "how gladly would I transfer to mamma the sin of all I did against you, laying upon her cruel commands the falsehood of my own actions! I told her I would rather die than marry Lord Bevis, I said so just before we went to town. Then I met Mr. Forde, and I complained of my fate to him. Oh, Constance, never complain to a man, who—but you don't need admonition; you never did. And he first pitied me, and then swore he would lose the world for me, lose all—lose *you*! And I thought I could love him, and I hated Lord Bevis: it was all settled in town. We came home quietly, and that evening you came, you know, to see me. before dinner, I would

have held back then, if I thought you had loved him as you or I *could* love !”

“ Poor Isabel,” said Constance.

“ He did not reproach me,” said Isabel ; “ but he shunned me ; I never shared one thought, one feeling with him. We had not spoken for days, when the news was brought me that he had put an end to his wretched life !”

Constance shuddered, and drew closer to Isabel who had fallen back in her chair, not senseless, indeed, but as pale and cold as if she were on the verge of a fainting fit.

“ You must not speak of those times,” said Constance ; “ you are not strong enough :—don’t think of them, dear ; you will be happy yet !”

“ Holloa ! Constance, are you ready ?” cried Edgar leaning in at the window, equipped with line and fishing-basket, “ it is a cloudy day, thank goodness ; and I shall catch a brace for your pet, Mrs. Agatha’s dinner.”

“ Oh ! go, dear,” said Isabel ; “ I shall like to be left here alone.”

“ Yes—I’ll come, Edgar ;” said Constance, ringing for her walking dress. “ That plague of a boy has found a wonderful stream, and I am to go fishing with him to see his prowess. There are books just at hand if you fancy them. Stay, I’ll take a volume of Coleridge with me, for these Pythagoreans, these anglers, won’t let you talk, Isabel !”

Constance found the hollow where the brook ran quite as beautiful as Edgar had promised it ; and she enjoyed herself very much under a hawthorn which looked as if it might date from the Druids, reading that beautiful fragment in the Sybilline Leaves, called the Picture, where one rich sketch of forest scenery follows another like the shows on a magic-lantern ; and where, like a jewel set in gold, another fragment is enclosed, in which with a distinctness perfectly artistical, a lover is described as gazing on the reflection

of his mistress in the water, until her own hand disturbs the even surface of the pool.

The lulling music of the verse, and all those sweet sounds common to a summer's noon, so passionately painted by Milton in *Il Penseroso*, chased each other through her brain, until she lost all note of time and place, and was startled, when after an interval long enough, as he thought, to tire her patience, Edgar made his appearance with the promised brace of trout glittering on the fresh-gathered grass at the bottom of his basket.

"I'll take you a short way to Mrs. Agatha's," said Edgar; "the sun has come out, and it's plaguy hot, we shall be in the shade across the fields as far as the stile, then over that bit of hill, and you are at your old pet's cottage."

"I wonder why he does not like her," said Constance, stopping to gather a branch of wild roses, "she is so remarkably kind in her manner."

"I dare say!" returned Edgar; "when she calls me 'my dear,' I wonder what they would think of her at school?"

"Oh! then the murder is out!" exclaimed Constance; "poor Mrs. Agatha! she does not understand the etiquette of boy's society! What is it to be? Master Edgar—Mr. E. D'Oyley—his royal highness of—"

"Constance, you stupid!"

"Shall I hint to my friend the slight misunderstanding which exists?"

"Don't, Constance!"

"Well, I can't deny that you have caught her two beautiful trout, so I must be content with that proof of your good will for the present."

It was a little embarrassing to be sure. There was Mrs. Agatha standing in her pretty rustic porch, and Captain Bohun leaning over her little gate talking to her. Nothing passed for the first few minutes beyond the ordinary greetings; for Edgar had to tell him all about the

trout and the way he caught them, which was a very interesting, and threatened to be a very long story.

“ But, really, catching them on purpose for me,” said Mrs. Agatha, when Constance had informed her of that circumstance, “ is a piece of gallantry I have not had addressed to me for many a long year. Why, my dear, I am afraid you will turn my poor head !”

Edgar coloured ; and Constance burst into one of her merry peals of laughter.

“ Oh ! Mrs. Agatha !” she cried ; “ he is a misanthrope, that boy ; he cannot endure to be called *my dear*.”

“ Upon my word,” said Mrs. Agatha very good-humouredly, “ I ought to have guessed as much ; when young gentlemen arrive at a certain age, it behoves us to be very careful in our modes of address. But an old woman, my dear—there again ! Mr. Edgar—may be allowed a little liberty of speech.”

“ But for you,” said Constance looking up at Captain Bohun, and speaking with an ease which surprised herself, “ Edgar has a much more grievous charge against you than against Mrs. Agatha. He has been asking everybody about the house when you were likely to visit us again. He has two or three secrets to tell you, I suppose, from his mysterious looks. You know his trick of wedging anybody against the window-panes, or into the corner of the room, and inflicting his confidence upon them ; but, whether he wants to be a heavy dragoon, or to make you guess the weight of the last carp he landed, I am quite at a loss to know.”

“ Of course,” said Edgar, “ I have many things to talk about that it would be of no use telling to girls.”

“ Oh ! then it's the commission,” returned Constance. “ The last advice Eustace gave him was to try to be one of them, or their's—or some such phrase.

His English is rather confused at times, verging, indeed, upon Arabic in the written character."

"Come, come!" said Mrs. Agatha; "if you are so severe upon your gay cousin, I shall know what to think."

Constance looked archly at Captain Bohun, and he answered her look by a smile of intelligence which showed that he was perfectly *au fait* of her position with her very attractive cousin.

"Could you," said she to Captain Bohun; "could you tell me whether the place of a trumpeter can be had like a tide-waiter's for the asking; because that, I know, is the extent of Edgar's ambition."

They all laughed heartily at this, even Edgar, though he muttered something about "paying her out" at some unknown period.

"But seriously," said Captain Bohun, "I have been wishing for some days to pay my respects to you; but I thought I might

be in your way as you have an invalid in the house."

"Not the least," returned Constance; "our invalid, I am sorry to say, keeps her room almost exclusively, and requires but little care since she spends much of her time alone. But I am glad to tell you that, in every other respect, she goes on much to the satisfaction of our good doctor."

Captain Bohun bowed to this piece of information; but regarded her earnestly, as if he did not quite understand why it should be addressed to him.

"She is a most interesting creature, poor young thing," said Mrs. Agatha; "I don't wonder, my dear, that your feelings were readily engaged; she has begun to win upon my affections even in this short time."

"Very well," replied Constance, "then come as often as you can to see her. You ought to have nothing to do; you would

not, if you were not so very kind to everybody ; so do spend a little of your charity upon us when you have any to spare."

"This young lady knows how to flatter, does she not, Captain Bohun?" asked Mrs. Agatha.

"I do believe not," he replied.

There was so much of heart in his tone, that it almost destroyed the composure on which Constance had prided herself.

She hurried away, saying to Mrs. Agatha : "This is a morning call, recollect, which will be registered against you ; so make haste to pay your debts."

Captain Bohun begged to be allowed to walk home with her ; but she tried to laugh off the request, and said it was a practice she never encouraged, and that she could not reconcile it to her conscience to deprive Mr. Agatha of her beaus.

He looked rather puzzled, she thought, but she hastened down the winding pathway with Edgar, and was soon out of sight of the porch and its inmates.

“ You are walking at a good round pace, this hot day, Miss Constance,” said Edgar, who seemed to find some little difficulty in keeping up with her. “ Why, good gracious! you are not crying, dear ; what is the matter ?”

“ Nothing, a mistake of yours,” said Constance turning away her head, “ but we may as well walk at a more reasonable rate. There is no hurry.”

CHAPTER VII.

You would be married, and less than ladies,
And of the best sort can serve you. Thou silk worm,
What hast thou in thee to deserve this woman ?
'Thy clothes are all the soul thou hast.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

CONSTANCE found upon her return to the house that her mamma had had the pleasure of entertaining Sir Morgan Wyndham for the last quarter of an hour, a task that can hardly be appreciated by those who have not undergone a similar one.

A man of his ignorance and pretension overwhelms a woman with civilities when he has any motive for them ; but a woman neither young nor in possession of any

money which he is likely to come by, must expect, and I hope she may survive it, to be rudely neglected. Sir Morgan did not very well know what to say to Mrs. D'Oyley ; it was of no use to lean his arm over the back of her chair ; he was blindly ignorant of all ordinary literary topics ; he did not happen to comprehend needlework, and he had already mentioned the state of the weather. There was a solemn pause. It is true he could have told her a good many pleasing little anecdotes of the splendid dog which had followed him in, and which stood, with its magnificent head lifted above the library table, surveying its contents with an air of sagacity that its master might have well envied ! But the delicate and composed aspect of Mrs. D'Oyley, as she leaned in the deep arm chair and calmly pursued her work, somewhat daunted him from a display of his stable and kennel lore.

There is a natural antipathy in the mind of such a man to a woman who awes him.

He wished her in the Red Sea ; looked impatiently from the window ; and entertained something like an idea that he would call his next hunter Constance. He thought over the probable rent-roll of Leyton and its belongings ; wished that people could hunt in summer ; glanced at Mrs. D'Oyley, and discovered that she had a pretty foot, on the strength of which he took up the old topic of the weather, and remarked that the last two days had been unusually hot, and he should not wonder, if it were to end in a thunderstorm.

Mrs. D'Oyley thought it very likely.

“ Was she afraid of thunder ? ”

She confessed to feeling rather nervous if the storm was a severe one.

“ He hoped Miss D'Oyley was not apt to suffer from the same cause.

“ Not at all,” Mrs. D'Oyley replied, “ her daughter was remarkably free from nervous fears of any kind.”

Sir Morgan said he was delighted to hear it, and then came another pause. Sir

Morgan was thinking of what to say, a proceeding that generally ends in profound silence. It was at this crisis that Constance walked in, gave him good morning, and sat down to write a note. While she was doing so he said he was charmed to see her look so well, and he had been wretched for the last few days, because he had passed them with a friend in the next county, and had therefore been unable to wait upon her.

Constance, who was engrossed with her note, replied that she could easily imagine that ; and rang for a taper. Sir Morgan suggested that there was a great deal of sympathy in their tastes ; and Constance turning quickly round, asked him if he liked gingerbread. He replied in the negative, and she assured him with much gravity and a little reproach in her tone, that there was not a thing of any importance upon which they were agreed. The gentleman fell to protesting, and the lady sealed her note ; while Sir Morgan ran his eye along

the fine range of timber which extended itself in every variety of group as far as the eye could reach, and thought how much of it should be felled when it belonged to him to pay his present debts, and how his first move of all would be to send poor Mrs. D'Oyley, (who sat unconscious on the other side of the room,) to the Antipodes.

“ Well, now,” said Constance, turning round with the utmost friendliness of manner, “ how did you come over ?”

“ I rode.”

“ The chestnut ?”

“ No, my bay mare.”

“ Oh ! but that is very wrong ; always ride the chestnut when you come hither because, when I go to the window to see you off, I have the pleasure of seeing the chestnut too. It is a great pleasure to me to see you ride off !”

This speech which was rather ambiguous, was seized by Sir Morgan as an earnest of her good intentions towards himself. Mrs.

D'Oyley raised her eyes to Constance, with a look of unfeigned astonishment ; and she, diverted beyond measure, that her meaning had been mistaken, turned aside, and buried her face in her pocket-handkerchief. Had Mrs. D'Oyley been absent, Sir Morgan would have been at her feet ; but as it was, he contented himself with vowing that her slightest wish was his law.

She was saved the trouble of a reply by the entrance of Tim for her note. She gave him very minute directions about taking it to the schoolmistress and waiting for an answer, to Sir Morgan's great discomfort, for he had prepared a fine speech, and it was gradually melting out of his head.

Just as Tim was going out of the room, he turned round, and said with a look of infinite glee, " Miss Constance, the bees is swarming ! "

" Are they ? I am so glad ! Where ? " cried Constance.

“ On the great pear tree, in the south garden, Miss,” said Tim ; “ there’s Master Edgar with the gardeners, and two of the boys, making such a noise !”

“ Is Anderson there ?” said Constance.

“ Yes, Miss,” said Tim ; “ and Mr. Anderson says it is a beautiful swarm.”

“ I shall go and see it,” returned Constance ; “ I am very much interested in my bees.”

“ My dear Constance,” said Mrs. D'Oyley, “ surely the bees can swarm without your assistance ; recollect, you were stung last time.”

“ For the sake of your nerves, then, my dear mamma, I will keep out of their way,” said Constance ; “ but I must go to the great staircase window, for I can see the pear tree there, and watch their doings.”

“ You must permit me to join you,” said Sir Morgan, “ I have so much pleasure in these—rustic—”

(He seldom knew how to complete a sentence.)

It was very far from the intention of Constance to have permitted this ; but she could not well refuse, and they took their places together at the staircase, she sitting on the window seat, and Sir Morgan leaning against the wall by her side, in what he thought a very striking attitude. They could see the pear tree, and a small black cloud waving and moving about it previously to settling.

It so happened, that Isabel was going from her dressing-room to the morning-room at this moment, and was passing by the window. Constance stopped her.

“Look here, dear Isabel,” said she, “did you ever see bees swarm ? I bought my hive of an old woman in the village ; and she said I should have no luck, unless I gave her gold for them. I gave her gold ; and you see I have a swarm, the first year.”

Isabel smiled faintly, and leaned forward to see what was going on.

Sir Morgan fixed on her face that remorseless stare, which empty-headed men of the present day think themselves privileged to bestow on women who please them.

She did not perceive it, however. Gently extricating herself from the detaining hand of her friend, she moved quietly across the landing into the morning-room.

“Who is that amazingly beautiful creature?” exclaimed Sir Morgan as the door closed upon her.

“My friend, Mrs. Forde,” replied Constance.

Sir Morgan repented of his warmth. “Ah! a widow, poor thing!” he stammered. “I dare say the dress sets her off; there’s something in—”

“Not at all, in her case,” said Constance. “She was more beautiful before,

and will be again. Her loss is very recent."

"Ah ! indeed ;" said Sir Morgan. But he had been so struck by the beauty of Isabel, that it absolutely silenced him.

Constance meanwhile sat gazing into the garden, and drawing a parallel in her mind, between her present suitor and her cousin Eustace.

"Both are very ignorant," she thought, "both love hunting. I wonder whether all men who love hunting, are naturally stupid. No, I should think not ; Lord Bevis is a desperate rider, and he is remarkably intelligent ; but I think Eustace has most originality in his dulness, he is so gloriously contented with it ; and then he has some honesty about him. Now this man is a knave !"

It is just as well that people should not know what the person at their elbow is thinking about. They would not always be much gratified if they did.

Sir Morgan in his turn was dreaming over the beauty of Isabel, and wishing that she possessed the broad acres which belonged to her less gifted friend.

“Now that there is nothing more to see, I am going,” said Constance.

“And I must take my leave, I fear,” said Sir Morgan.

Constance nodded.

“I am going to Lady Bohun’s,” he said; “can I do anything for you there?”

“Nothing at all,” returned Constance, who was determined never to employ him on any errand that might lead to the belief that they were intimate.

“When does her archery fête come off; do you know?” he asked, as they went down.

“Some time, in this month,” returned Constance.

“Do you mean to try for a prize?”

“Yes, I shall shoot. I can hit the target somewhere or other, by this time.”

"I shall certainly bet upon you," he said.

"Pray do," returned Constance, "only let me warn you not to bet anything very extravagant on my performance ; because, I know I shall be decidedly the worst shot at the meeting."

"I am sure you will not ; in fact, you can do nothing—you excel in all that—"

"Of course," said Constance, "I was born with a propensity to do everything right ; only, I have not cultivated this propensity so highly as some others, that's all. No, indeed, I shall not see you off to-day, as you are riding that stupid bay."

"You may be sure I shall recollect your *penchant* for the chestnut. Good morning."

"Insufferable coxcomb !" said she, as she went up to her mamma's dressing-room.

"My very dear Constance," said Mrs. D'Oyley, "I am glad to see you for a few moments before dinner. What you have been dreaming about this morning is a wonder to me ; for you surely cannot mean

to give serious encouragement to that very trifling person."

Constance stood selecting the flowers with which she meant to make her mamma's nosegay.

"I rise to explain," she said, with a saucy little smile. "Are we poor women to keep all the goodness to ourselves, my dear mamma? Is it not a little hard that they should play upon our feelings in every possible way, and that we should never be allowed to return the compliment? May we not be a little naughty now and then?"

"Oh no! dear Constance," said Mrs. D'Oyley; "if they allow themselves such latitude of moral action, let us retain the pre-eminence in strict integrity; and particularly in matters which the law cannot reach—in matters of honour. I know this man does not wish for your heart; but if you allow him to hope for your house and lands, when you do not mean to give them to him; is that, dear Constance, truly honest?"

“ Not altogether ‘ the high Roman fashion,’ dear mamma ; and I really will amend,” she replied ; “ but if you only knew the pleasure of a little retaliation !”

CHAPTER VIII.

And love that cannot find a voice, will spend
 Its fancies in unreal bitterness.
 Chiding, instead of its own silent heart,
 'The object it would win.

ANON.

Old ponds, dim shadowed with a broken tree,
 These are the picturesque of taste to me ;
 While panting winds, to make complete the scene,
 In rich confusion mingle every green.

CLARE.

By this time Isabel was more tranquil, and more domesticated than she had been at Leyton. She saw no company, but she had very little choice in that respect ; few guests were admitted on account of Mr. D'Oyley's infirmity. She moved about the house at will ; busied herself in the con-

servatory, or among the flowers disposed in the large hall windows ; and sometimes, when Constance was very urgent, consented to a short stroll in the grounds.

Mrs. Agatha was often her companion, and the kind old lady seemed to feel a real affection for the beautiful and unprotected creature who had been so unexpectedly added to her very small circle of friends.

On such occasions, Constance was very willing to resign her place beside her, and join Edgar and Lord Bevis in their rides. One morning, Mrs. Agatha having come early, was seized upon by Constance as her natural property for the rest of the day ; and as it happened to be tolerably cool, that morning, she was easily persuaded by Edgar that the proper thing to do was to make one of the riding party. So he scampered off to the stables, with Tim after him, to see that his sister's horse was looking his best, and did not require to have his mane combed, a ceremony which he seemed to

think could not be performed often enough ; and to inspect the girths of her saddle twenty times, with his head very much on one side, and his whip held tight under his arm.

Edgar was very proud of Constance on horseback. None of the other ladies in the neighbourhood looked so well, he thought. He admired her picturesque Vandyke gloves, and the clusters of curls that prevented her hat from spoiling her countenance ; and the sweep of her long, dark, blue habit, and the little delicate riding whip slung to her wrist. Constance did not ride by any means so well as her cousin Mary ; but she looked ten times prettier, “ that was all he knew about it.”

And now they were mounted and off ; Lord Bevis holding in his fiery Arabian to the more composed paces of the horse which Constance rode. They proceeded through the village, and the shady lane beyond, just catching a glimpse, as they swept by, of the cheerful face of Mrs. Agatha's little maid at her

lattice, as she looked up from her work; and then galloped like lightning over the wide downs and along the hill-side, crushing the wild thyme under their feet, and scattering the pebbles, and flinging up a perfect shower of water as they dashed through the shallow brook without drawing rein; and then paced slowly under the wide-spreading oaks beyond. Constance was half laughing and quite breathless, and Edgar was pulling up with an appearance of extreme nonchalance, and lifting his hat to enjoy the benefit of the soft south wind.

“Pretty well that,” said he.

“Put your hat on straight, please” said Constance, imploringly.

“There then,” said Edgar, giving the hat the proper inclination over his brows.

“You contrive to make every one obey you, Miss D'Oyley,” said Lord Bevis.

“Do I? Then let me leap that little fence!”

“Pray don't. Mrs. D'Oyley trusted you to my discretion, remember.”

“ I am sure Clematis could do it.”

“ Of course,” said Edgar, “ he would take it fast enough, and pitch you over his head into the bargain.”

“ Now I am determined on it,” cried Constance ; “ get out of the way both of you !”

“ Take care !” they exclaimed together ; but before they had spoken, she was safe on the other side.

As they were riding up the avenue, they encountered Captain Bohun who had just entered the park gates.

He told Constance he was glad to meet her, for he was the bearer of a message to her from Lady Bohun ; and he drew up his horse as if he meant to give it on the spot.

“ Indeed,” said Constance ; “ come into the house and tell it me.”

“ If you will allow me I will deliver it at once,” he said, “ I have not a moment to spare. It is about the archery meeting : will you have white hats or green ?”

“ White, with an acorn wreath ;

but you must come in while I write a note."

"Surely you will trust my memory with so short a reply," said Captain Bohun, "particularly as I very much admire your taste."

"No, I wish to send Lady Bohun a sketch of the archery dress which I don't carry about with me. Do come in. I wonder what papa has done that you have not been to see him so long. I see as plainly what you are thinking about, as if you took the trouble to tell me. You had better have it over, unless you mean to leave us altogether."

Before she had done speaking, Captain Bohun had dismounted and was handing her up the hall steps.

Isabel was seated in an arm chair near one of the French windows in the drawing-room, Mrs. D'Oyley working beside her.

She turned her head languidly as the party entered, and coloured deeply at the sight of Captain Bohun.

He bowed to her without speaking, and began a conversation with Mrs. D'Oyley.

Constance went to a table a little behind Isabel, and turned over a blotting-book.

“ Oh ! Lord Bevis.”

“ Miss D'Oyley !”

“ You said you would draw me a sketch of the archery dress. Will you ?”

“ With pleasure ; but I can only give you the shape of it ; I don't pretend to draw.”

“ Here is pen and ink ; now something very pretty !”

“ I am sure you don't wish for any thing pretty, unless it happen to be authentic.”

“ I am sure I shall wear nothing ugly. Now do be so kind as to invent a better sleeve ; I don't like that one.”

“ It is correct.”

“ No matter. I am obliged to keep you waiting, Captain Bohun !”

“ You are very good ! I am not at all pressed for time.”

“ I know that you could perfectly well stay to dinner if you chose.”

“ Is that an invitation, Miss D'Oyley ?”

“ Suppose it were, would you accept it ?”

“ Can you doubt it ?”

“ Then, mamma, would you be so kind as to put it in form. Really, some morning, I'll learn all proper modes of address out of the book of etiquette.”

“ Captain Bohun knows that he is a very welcome guest,” said Mrs. D'Oyley in her usually composed manner.

“ Do you mean that for a likeness of me, Lord Bevis ?” said Constance who was watching the progress of the drawing.

“ Of course, don't you think it very successful ?”

“ Oh ! mamma, look ! look, Isabel !”

Mrs. Forde smiled faintly, and took the paper.

“ I think there is something of her air,” said Mrs. D'Oyley.

“ It is quite unintentional then,” said Lord Bevis smiling. “ You don't suppose, Miss D'Oyley, that I should presume to attempt your face in this off-hand manner.”

“ I should be only too flattered by the circumstance. Now, thank you first for the drawing ; and now, Captain Bohun, ride off to Lady Bohun with this sketch, and then come back to dinner.”

“ I shall be too happy,” said Captain Bohun.

“ Exactly. Had you any other message for me that you have forgotten ?”

“ If I had, I have, as you say, forgotten it.”

Lord Bevis pointed to some lines in a book that lay open before him. Constance stooped down and read them :

With thee conversing I forget all time,
All seasons and their change.

“How fond you are of that old, radical Milton,” said she pushing away the book. “I really don’t believe you are a Tory at heart.”

“I have a strong partiality for the people,” he returned.

“People or populace?” asked Constance.

“Oh! I like them in any shape, as your friend Sir Morgan said of the oysters, the other day.”

“And what do we all mean to do till dinner time?” asked Constance. “I am going to papa.”

Isabel had left the room.

“I am going to persuade Mrs. Agatha to walk with me in the flower-garden,” said Lord Bevis.

“I shall follow that poor thing,” said Mrs. D'Oyley folding up her work, “I am afraid she is not so well to-day.”

At dinner, Mrs. Forde did not appear. Constance fancied that Captain Bohun

looked anxious and disappointed. She began to talk to him about Isabel, and when he looked a little bored, she fancied he was weary of her conversation ; and she gave him no more of it during dinner. It was in vain that he sought to address her on a variety of subjects, his last attempt was an inquiry after a pair of ponies that she had been very anxious to have trained for a low carriage ; upon this she referred him to Lord Bevis, who, she said was a judge of such matters, which for her part she hated. He very quietly transferred his inquiries to Lord Bevis ; and soon after the ladies went into the drawing-room.

There, after a few minutes' conversation with Isabel, Constance took Mrs. Agatha out into the garden to see her new azalias.

“ And pray, little lady,” said Mrs. Agatha, looking quaintly at Constance, “ what has Captain Bohun been about that he has fallen under your sovereign displeasure ?”

“Nothing at all,” replied Constance. “I did not know he was under my displeasure.”

“I merely judged by the short answers you gave to all his remarks at dinner.”

“That was because he bored me by talking about horses,” said Constance; “it is very strange how some people do delight in talking of animals! I am sure it is a sign they can talk of nothing else: there is Sir Morgan now! Somebody in Blackwood’s days, ‘without literature or manners, I hardly see how a man can be a gentleman,’ I always long to show Sir Morgan that sentence.”

“Yes, we were talking of Captain Bohun,” said Mrs. Agatha, smiling.

“I don’t know how it was we were talking of him,” said Constance; “when a subject is not attractive, it is better to change it. If you like to cultivate azalias, I will send you some plants; but with your

fine bog earth it is a sin that you should grow anything but rhododendrons."

Mrs. Agatha accepted the offer of some azalias, and they sauntered on in silence for some time.

At last Constance exclaimed with much indignation: "And he is so proud too!"

"That is a great objection," said Mrs. Agatha. "Are we still speaking of Sir Morgan?"

Constance could not help laughing, but she turned to go back to the house without making any reply.

"Don't be capricious, my dear," said Mrs. Agatha, detaining her for a moment as she was about to enter, "because those people who won't bear caprice are generally those whose esteem is most worth preserving."

The gentlemen had just come into the drawing-room, and Mrs. D'Oyley had rung for tea. Captain Bohun was talking to her father, and showed no other indication of her being present, than moving out

of the way as Constance took her place at the tea-table. Mrs. Agatha offered her services, but Constance declined them.

“I mean to perfect myself in the art of tea-making, though Lord Bevis does look so disappointed,” she said. “You know, Mrs. Agatha, he always held you up as a pattern of the domestic virtues.”

“I thought you made tea very well, my dear !” said Mrs. Agatha.

“Miss D'Oyley is so ambitious,” said Lord Bevis, “she is never content unless she surpasses everybody.”

“I shall tell Mary when I write how severe you have become,” said Constance. “By-the-bye, I had a letter from her to-day.”

“Indeed,” said Lord Bevis, drawing his chair nearer ; “why you never told me so !”

“Well, I am going to tell you now. She is so sorry to have left Leyton ; she misses me so much !”

“ I have no doubt of it.”

“ And all our rides together ! By-the-bye, what a delightful ride we had this morning ; I do think this is the most beautiful part of all our beautiful country.”

“ So it is. That lane with the oaks meeting overhead !”

“ And the deep pool by the side, with the dragon-flies ; where Edgar caught one that evening !”

“ You ought to sketch, you know, Miss D'Oyley ; it is a great defect.”

“ I am too old to learn, you know, Lord Bevis ; besides I think it vulgar to draw. You see every pert little school-girl with a portfolio of scratches. But I intend you to make me a study of that pond with the crooked ash trees, and some cows standing half-way in the water, some straggling over the bank, just as they were the other evening ; and the hill side beyond, and the sunlight chequering everything. Can you draw sunlight ?”

“Undoubtedly ; everything you wish to have drawn, must be drawn.”

“I'll do a great many things in return, for you.”

“Thank you. Will you give me another cup of tea ?”

“This instant. Isabel, I shall scold you for not eating anything. Lord Bevis, carry this cake to Isabel, and tell her it is the very lightest nothing she can take.”

“To set your mind at rest ? Because there is no other reason why she should eat when she does not like it.”

“You will do exactly as I bid you,” said Constance. “Men have no idea of nursing or being nursed. You owe all your comfort to our sex, and all your civilization. I am never tired of thinking how much better women are than men.”

Everybody laughed at this speech, and Mr. D'Oyley asked Constance how the matter could be settled, since both parties were interested witnesses.

Mrs. Agatha went to talk to Mrs. Forde, Edgar was very busy with a book at his mamma's work-table, and Constance drew her chair to the piano ; but before she began to play, she turned to Captain Bohun, and said to him distinctly, but with some embarrassment :

“ Perhaps you will be so good as to show those views of Palestine to Mrs. Forde, she was wishing to see them this morning.”

Captain Bohun professed his willingness to do so, and crossed over to Isabel with the portfolio.

She had not finished her first set of waltzes, when a servant announced Sir Morgan Wyndham, who paid his compliments hastily round the circle, and then seated himself behind her chair.

“ Such a very unusual hour to make a call !” said he, “ but I thought you looking rather pale at Church yesterday, and therefore I could not deny myself the pleasure of assuring myself that you were quite restored to-day.”

“No. Do you go to Church?” said Constance, turning round and surveying him with much surprise.

“Yes,” returned Sir Morgan, “I make a point of attending that sort of thing. I think it quite proper to patronise—”

“The Christian religion. How very kind!” said Constance.

“Yes; you know we are all Conservatives,” said Sir Morgan, “and it always goes together.”

“Going to Church and going, whither?” asked Constance.

“I mean, you know, it is so ungentlemanly to cut the Church.”

“Ah! I shall understand you in time,” replied Constance.

“Meanwhile, Miss D'Oyley, will you sing me the ‘Return of the Admiral,’” said Lord Bevis.

Sir Morgan, who for some time had been staring hard at Isabel, and wondering where he had seen something like the perfect oval of her face enclosed in the widow's cap,

now lounged up to her, and began a desultory conversation. But Isabel, whose spirits were unequal to the exertion, gave him so little assistance, that after an exchange of a few interrupted sentences, he retreated back to Miss D'Oyley, half afraid that, as it was, she would perceive how much he was charmed by the singular beauty of her friend.

In fact, Isabel, who was very unfit to bear the fatigue of society, rose and retired to her room, and then Sir Morgan took occasion to learn whether or not she was well endowed.

He said carelessly to Constance, that her beautiful friend seemed very languid, that evening, to which she assented with a sigh. He then hinted that he hoped so fair a creature was likely to be always surrounded by every comfort and luxury that wealth could bestow.

Constance replied: "That few people might be said to have wealth more at their command, for that if she had a mind to

contract a second marriage, her beauty would always secure her an advantageous settlement."

This reply not containing the information which Sir Morgan sought, he was compelled to defer his curiosity till he could consult some one else.

As Captain Bohun took leave of Constance, he expressed a hope, in a low tone, that she had forgiven his offences.

"Why, what have you done?" exclaimed Constance, looking up in some astonishment.

"Nay, that I don't know," said he, smiling, "but I venture to hope that I may be forgiven, notwithstanding."

"You are laughing at me," said Constance. "You mean to ask whether I can forgive myself for being angry without a cause. I'll tell you when next we meet."

"But for the present—" said he hesitating.

"Oh! we part on excellent terms," said Constance; "good night."

“I hope, Miss D'Oyley, you mean to take as circumstantial a leave of me,” said Sir Morgan, who had watched with some little pique the half whispered conversation between herself and Captain Bohun.

“By no means,” replied Constance ; and turning round to the piano, she began to play a very loud march, which effectually drowned any remonstrance he might mean to offer.

CHAPTER IX.

EROS.—I want your absence,

Keep on your way, I care not for your company.

SER.—How ? how ? You are very short ; do you know
me, Eros ?

EROS.—Yes, I know ye.

And I hope I shall forget ye.

THE FALSE ONE.

IMO.—You are as welcome, worthy friends, as I
Have words to bid you ; and shall find it so
In all that I can do.

CYMBELINE.

“ I MUST put a stop to this some way or other,” said Constance to herself, as she came into the library, the next morning, after her stroll into the park, and found Sir Morgan awaiting her return ; “ this won’t do at all !”

Lord Bevis was talking to her father ; poor Mrs. D'Oyley had been afflicted with the Baronet for about five minutes, and looked rather less tired and bored than if she had been annoyed by him for a quarter of an hour. But it is somewhat difficult to avoid speaking to a person who comes to your house on purpose to see you.

Sir Morgan was at her side in a moment, and although she had, after nodding to him, taken her mamma's knitting from her, and affected to find some terrible mistake in the stitch, she was obliged to look round, and reply to his anxious inquiries.

“ No, nothing very terrible ; but a wrong colour begun in this row ; you will not be able to do any good.”

“ I wish I could remedy—”

“ No doubt you do , and if I were you, now, that there is no hunting going forward, I would begin to learn all the known stitches. It would very much increase your value in society.”

“ I think I shall take your advice.”

“ Do you know how to net ?”

“ I am sorry to say I do not.”

“ There now ! I have a cousin who can net a little. He does it all wrong ; but there must be a beginning to everything.”

“ Certainly, I wish I—”

“ Can you do carpet work ?”

“ Yes, I can manage that a little.”

“ Well ; have the kindness, will you, to go on with this dahlia ; count the stitches, mind, here is the pattern.”

“ I shall be successful, I am sure, as long as you are kind enough to remain here to inspire me.”

“ Very likely ; but I am soon going to look at my seedling geraniums,” said Constance taking up her work.

“ Do you undertake to open an academy for needlework,” said Lord Bevis crossing over to her.

“ Not for dunces,” said Constance. “ I am sure you would do me no credit. Stay, you may go on a little with this slipper.

No! don't hold your needle so. Ah! the scissors. You will cut the canvass! Papa! Lord Bevis is working on your slipper! There, you shall do one whole violet. Papa! I will tell you how I have arranged your slippers. A little cluster of violets in the front of each. You have no idea how fine the threads are; it will be just like painting. Don't laugh, Lord Bevis; I mean common painting."

"Something in the way of oriental tinting," said Lord Bevis.

"Is not this rose delicious, papa;" said Constance seating herself by his side on the sofa.

"It is, indeed, my dear. What sort of rose is it? Something new?"

"Yes, a small double cluster rose; it grows all over my Tudor window. What are you about, Lord Bevis?"

"Nothing but mischief, I am afraid, Miss D'Oyley, I had better give you your work back again."

Constance took her slipper, and remained leaning on her papa's shoulder, working and talking. "Do you know, papa, Mrs. Agatha told me such a strange story of the people who lived once in the Harris's house. There was a man, who— Go, and sit down, Lord Bevis ; how is it possible I can tell papa my story while you are standing—close to this footstool, papa—and looking straight into my face ?"

"I will sit down, with pleasure, Miss D'Oyley ; but I would not for the world miss hearing your story. I have a great curiosity to know what sort of a man it was who lived in the Harris's house."

"I know you are laughing," returned Constance ; "but papa shall have my story for all that. I ought first to tell you that the grandmother of this man was a very eccentric person, and— Oh ! Sir Morgan, let me see how you are getting on. That is, really, very well done. I

did not think you were so clever—there, now, I have quite done with you ; I don't want you any more to-day.”

At this abrupt announcement of her feelings, Mrs. D'Oyley raised her head, and gave her daughter a gently reproving look ; but Constance, who had more accurately measured the Baronet's sensibilities, merely smiled in return.

“ You will allow me to remain, I hope,” said Sir Morgan, “ to hear this anecdote which we are all expecting so impatiently.”

“ What anecdote ?”

“ The one about the Harris's house.”

“ Oh ! I have forgotten all about it. Your carpet work has driven it out of my head ; but you do not mean to run away so soon ? We are going to luncheon in a few minutes.”

“ I shall be delighted—”

“ I wonder whether Evans means to be punctual to-day,” said Lord Bevis ; “ I have a mind to ride over to H—— before dinner.”

“ Oh ! if you are going to H——, I have a hundred things for you to do for me,” cried Constance.

“ You never will employ me,” whispered Sir Morgan.

“ Yes, I will ; you may hold this skein of wool for me in a minute, when I have written down my commissions for Lord Bevis.”

“ How is all this to end, my dear Mrs. D'Oyley ?” said Lord Bevis, glancing at Constance and Sir Morgan as they sat near together ; Sir Morgan dutifully holding the skein as directed, and Constance talking over her shoulder to Edgar as she wound it.”

Mrs. D'Oyley shook her head.

“ But, who are these people driving up to the house ?” exclaimed Constance ; “ look, Edgar ! Are they any of our neighbours, Sir Morgan ?”

Sir Morgan, with the skein of scarlet worsted still on his hands, went to the window, and declared that the ark which

was approaching the house, bore no resemblance to any carriage of his acquaintance.

Edgar, who thought it was very witty to call the carriage an ark, leaned out of the window, partly to hide his laughter, and partly to investigate the appearance of the ladies, who were now alighting on the front steps. "Why, Constance," he cried, suddenly drawing back, "who would have thought it, here come Mrs. Manley and her daughters!"

"Is it possible," exclaimed Constance; "I am heartily glad to see anybody from C——."

She rose so hastily, that she threw down her basket of worsteds, and leaving Sir Morgan to collect the many coloured balls, she advanced to meet them almost on the threshold. Her warmth was met with an equal show of ardour. It was very agreeable to know Miss D'Oyley of Leyton.

They were about to make a little excur-

sion in Wales, and made a point, they said, of taking Leyton in their way ; they were so anxious to see dear Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley and Constance again. It was soon arranged that they should remain with the D'Oyleys until the next day, to give time for both parties to talk over all that had happened since they parted. Their carriage was sent round, Constance rang to hurry the luncheon, and having persuaded the young ladies to lay aside their bonnets, which was not very easily done, for the girls had been younger, and they were afraid their hair might be tumbled, they all went into the dining-room to eat and drink, before they had any more conversation.

Sir Morgan, though he wished to ingratiate himself with Constance, did not think it necessary to extend his fascinations to her friends, perhaps, because he was conscious that he had very little to spare ; therefore, he allowed Lord Bevis

to help them to cold chicken, and wine and water, without attempting to give him any assistance. The Manleys were rather the gainers by this circumstance, for like many English people of a middling station, they had a wonderful affection for a title, and to have been waited upon by a Lord would furnish them with matter of exultation for the remainder of their lives. In fact, Edgar having disappeared before luncheon, the task of attending to them fell exclusively upon Lord Bevis, and he caused considerable agitation to Miss Harriet by cutting her a piece of bread, while Miss Louisa experienced even greater emotion at his rising to bring her some salad from a side-table.

“Where is Mrs. Forde?” asked Mr. D'Oyley; “I do not hear her voice.”

“She will not come down until dinner,” said Constance; “I ordered some jelly to be sent up into her dressing-room.”

Mrs. Manley began whispering and nodding to Mrs. D'Oyley. It really *was*

true then. They had heard so ! But really, such magnanimity ! And how was Mrs. Forde looking ? Of course, she must be delicate, it was not likely that under the circumstances— A few more nods and becks saved her from rounding off the period.

“ Can you tell me anything of Lady Hernshaw ? ” asked Constance of her neighbour, Miss Louisa.

“ Oh, yes ! we often see her about. She very seldom gives parties now. I think she looks older ; but she is, you know, a very reserved person. She never mentions her daughter ; and she holds herself so much above all her neighbours, that nobody is likely to ask her any questions.”

“ And how is Mrs. Barlow at the Mill ? ”

“ Very well, I believe,” said Miss Manley, colouring a little.

“ And all the other good people whom I knew ? ”

“ I think I can answer for them all ; they are just as you left them.”

“ Have you heard,” said Mrs. Manley,

“that Mr. Ayliffe is going to be married?”

“No,” cried Constance; “but I am very glad to hear it: and to whom?”

“Oh! stop, mamma, don’t tell; let Constance guess,” exclaimed both the Miss Manleys.

“I am quite at a loss,” said Constance, laughing; “but I really hope that he has not gone out of the village for a wife, there are so many ladies in C—.”

“I assure you,” said Miss Manley, with some little vexation in her voice, “that he has not paid C— so great a compliment.”

“Then I give it up at once,” said Constance, “for I knew no families out of C—, except the Hiltons, and I am sure, that is, I think I may be sure, that Mary is not going to marry Mr. Ayliffe!”

As she said this, she stole a mischievous glance at Lord Bevis, in the hope of seeing him look a little confused, but he replied very quietly:

“No ; from what I recollect of Mr. Ayliffe, I should say that he was not the sort of person to win Miss Hilton.”

“I would never venture to say that,” said Mrs. Manley, very reverently, however, for she was contradicting a Lord, and that was a serious matter to her ; “you can never tell until a gentleman offers whether he will be accepted. I am sure I have seen numbers of people accepted, whom I should never have believed the lady would have thought of. I think an offer is a very tempting thing to a young lady, unless she happens to be engaged.”

“What do you say to that, Lord Bevis ?” asked Constance.

“Why, Miss D'Oyley, as I am not a young lady, I conclude that I am no judge of the temptation.”

“Ah ! you know what I mean,” said Constance ; “but, my dear Miss Manley, pray do not keep me any longer in suspense, let me hear the name of the fair lady.”

“What would you say to Miss Jane Bland?” asked Miss Manley.

“The very last woman in the world,” exclaimed Constance; “utterly unsuited to him. Why I recollect at Uncle Hilton’s, at the ball with all the officers—”

“But people alter so much, my dear Miss D’Oyley,” said Mrs. Manley; “so many giddy girls make excellent wives!”

“And recollect, Miss D’Oyley,” said Lord Bevis, “that people never marry the person they are set down for.”

“All true!” replied Constance, “but still I think Jane Bland suited to almost any one rather than Mr. Ayliffe.”

“Ah! Miss D’Oyley,” said Sir Morgan, as they were all leaving the dining-rooms, “if I did but know what that happy man would resemble, who—who—”

“A bishop,” said Constance, cheerfully. “I have one in my eye; there is something irresistible in the lawn sleeves. Don’t stand, please, in the door-way, be-

cause I must go and attend to my visitors."

Mrs. Manley preferred remaining quietly in the house during the heat of the day, but the young ladies expressed great delight at the idea of exploring the pleasure-grounds under the guidance of Constance.

They expressed the usual ecstasies at the sight of the conservatories and forcing-houses, and the beautiful plants that adorned her own particular garden.

Constance, with a blue veil wrapped completely round her face and bonnet, for she was very much afraid of freckles, wandered from one sunny bed to another, and gathered for her visitors clusters of beautiful and rare flowers. At last they sat down on a shady bench, and began to arrange their spoils into different nosegays.

"And so," said Constance, "Mr. Ayliffe is really going to be married. Do tell me if there are any more matches on the tapis.

Miss Dyce, now ! There was a sort of probability, I hardly know what to call it, that she was likely to marry Mr. Linley."

" Oh ! that affair is just where it was," said Miss Manley. " When he is rich enough ! If he could but change his curacy into a good living, then people would say he need not despair. But that will never be ; or at least no prospect can be so uncertain and distant."

" Mamma does not like these long engagements," said the younger sister. " You want a sprig of jessamine, dear Constance ; this will just do. How fortunate you are ; your engagement need never be a long one."

" True !" said Miss Manley ; " and you need never marry at all if you don't particularly wish it. You will be just as much respected with your splendid property as if you were a married woman."

Constance thought with some pleasure, that when she had no property at all, she had preferred remaining single to marrying a person whom she did not particularly

like ; but there is no occasion to be more refined than your company, so she merely laughed, and told Miss Manley that she was very likely to illustrate her position, and that she should be curious to see how society would use her when she was an old maid.

“That was a very elegant young man sitting next to you at luncheon,” said Miss Louisa ; “there was something very aristocratic in his manner.”

Do you think so ?” returned Constance. “He is an idle neighbour of ours, who comes here oftener than any of us like.”

“Yes,” said Miss Manley, “particularly with that charming Lord Bevis staying in the house !” Here she looked as fixedly as she could at Constance’s purple veil.

“But between you and me, dear Miss Manley,” said Constance, “Lord Bevis shows a very bad taste, he has not shown the least disposition to marry me ; and really, when you consider the pounds he

would be in pocket by such a speculation—”

She was interrupted by the approach of Lord Bevis himself, who came to tell Constance that he had executed her commissions at H—. . He readily accepted a seat by her side, and then, taking her bouquet from her, began to suggest some improvements in its arrangement.

“ You want a moss rose-bud very much just here, Miss D'Oyley ;” here Miss Manley timidly offered one. “ Thank you, this will do very well. And some long grass would be an improvement. There, Miss D'Oyley, you will be very effective to-day at dinner, I promise you. Any body coming ?”

“ No. You are the only gentleman we shall have, except papa.”

“ And I am nobody ; what a misfortune ! Suppose I send a line to Bohun, and ask him to take pity on me ?”

“ You can do as you like.”

“Do you think he will come, Miss D'Oyley?”

“I dare say not. He is likely to have plenty of engagements; and besides, he was here yesterday.”

“That means that you would rather he did not come.”

“Yes it does,” returned Constance, quickly.

“Very well. I wish ladies would not wrap up their heads in those thick veils; it must be distressing to them this hot weather, and I am sure it is very disagreeable to us. I like to see the person I am talking to. Don't you agree with me, Miss Manley?”

“Ha! ha! Yes, I think—”

“Is it near dressing time?” asked Constance.

“It wants half an hour,” replied Lord Bevis. “Why don't you wear a watch, Miss D'Oyley?”

“I forgot to wind it up last night—that is all.”

“ Give it me, and I will set it right for you.”

“ There !” said Constance. “ Has Mrs. Agatha been here to-day, do you know ?”

“ She was just arrived when I returned from my ride ; but as she asked for Mr. D'Oyley, I did not let you know.”

“ I shall see her at dinner,” said Constance, “ and I know she has something to talk to papa about. Something about Isabel.”

“ Why, Mrs. Agatha dined here yesterday,” said Lord Bevis. “ You don't object to *her* company two days running, I find.”

“ I think that a very silly remark,” returned Constance, in a very unconcerned voice. “ I am quite ready to admit that Mrs. Agatha is one of the few persons whom I should be glad to see every day.”

“ It would be an excellent plan, I think,” said Lord Bevis, “ that Mrs. Forde should eventually reside with Mrs. Agatha.”

“ Yes, some day or other,” replied Constance ; “ but there is no sort of hurry.

It will be very pleasant for me to have two friends established at the little white cottage instead of one."

"Do you know how she was left, poor thing, in regard to money matters?" asked Miss Manley.

"She will have but a small income," said Constance; "but living in the way we propose, she will feel, I hope, but few inconveniences from her straightened means; and I don't expect, that is, it is not very likely—I mean," said she, her voice faltering a little, "so beautiful a creature will hardly remain a widow always."

Lord Bevis coughed a little, the Manleys did not venture to look at him; but they felt extremely curious to know whether Constance alluded to him or not.

"Your imagination is very active, Miss D'Oyley" he said, at last; "have you already provided a match for your fair friend?"

"I have provided nothing," said Constance, rather pettishly; "but I suppose

I have eyes. I have stated nothing but what is very probable."

"You certainly cannot deny that you have some special person in your eye," said Lord Bevis laughing, "I dare say I shall be able to guess. I am afraid my friend Edgar will be too young."

"Of course. You are so silly this morning," said Constance, rising. "I think, my dear Miss Manley, it is time for us to dress."

"I should not at all wonder," said Lord Bevis, rising also, "that you thought of transferring over Sir Morgan's allegiance to Mrs. Forde."

"You thought!" exclaimed Constance, who was growing angry.

"Still wide of the mark, am I?—Perhaps you think that Captain Bohun rides over now and then to get a peep of your beautiful friend. I believe you will acquit *me*, won't you?"

"I shall not answer any of your questions; but you will be kind enough to tell

me whether the man at H—— means to sell me that little Sky terrier ; if you didn't forget all about it."

"The man asks too much, and——"

"Oh ! but Edgar has set his heart upon it ; so I cannot help its being dear. I must have it."

"I was going to say, that Captain Bohun has promised Edgar one of his Sky terriers, which is quite ugly and savage enough to content him ; so you need not give the man at H—— an opportunity of cheating you."

"Certainly not. And when did Edgar see Captain Bohun ?"

"To-day, when we were out riding."

"Edgar rode with you then."

"He did."

"Well, I am glad he is about to have a Sky terrier at last, poor fellow."

"Oh ! it is a great advantage ; it will initiate him into the mysteries of rat-hunting, besides the great chance those small dogs always have of going mad."

“Not thorough-bred dogs,” said Constance, stepping into the drawing-room through the glass window. “Is not he disagreeable, my dear Miss Manley?”

Miss Manley could not allow it. She thought his manners so remarkably pleasing and cheerful.

“Don’t you think, Harriet,” said Mrs. Manley, just before they went down to dinner, “that Constance D’Oyley is very much improved?”

“Wonderfully!” said Miss Manley; “her manners are so much more attractive; and then she dresses so well!”

Constance had always dressed with taste, and always possessed the same frank cheerful manners. In her case a fortune merely brought forward the qualities she really possessed—in many cases it supplies them altogether.

Mr. Sedley, the Rector, dined with them. He was a grave, elderly man, benevolent and rather dignified in his manner. He was on terms of intimacy with the family,

and he thought very highly of Constance, for her liberality in the parish was not confined to giving alone, but led her to take trouble wherever Mr. Sedley thought her interference would be beneficial. He had a good deal to say to Constance and Mrs. Agatha before dinner, at a table in the corner of the drawing-room, and Constance was very busy writing names on a card, and showing them to him for his approval.

Mrs. Forde did not appear; and Constance too well understood her repugnance to meeting any C— people to urge her to join them. She contented herself by giving Edgar directions to drive Mrs. Forde about the park in a low pony carriage after dinner; and Edgar, not a little proud of being trusted with an errand of such importance, very readily consented to the arrangement. All parties were contented, except the Manleys, whose curiosity to see Isabel had been gradually increasing all day, and had now reached such a pitch that they could hardly

refrain from offering to go up into her room and pay their respects to her. They felt that when they returned to C—they should have a very imperfect account to render of the sayings and doings at Leyton, unless they could tell exactly how Mrs. Forde was looking, and with what degree of composure she managed to meet them after all her misdeeds. They had made up their minds too so exactly as to the species of calm compassion with which they had meant to confront her, and the sort of forgiving gentleness with which they intended to demonstrate the Christian state of their own feelings as regarded the past, that their vexation was considerable.

A slight incident occurred to console them in part : Constance proposed that, between dinner and tea, the ladies should take a drive. Mrs. Agatha and Mrs. D'Oyley preferred a stroll in the flower garden, so Constance set off with Mrs. Manley and her two daughters. She chose the most beautiful road in the neighbourhood ; took

them to see two ruins and a waterfall, and brought them home through the park, just as the moon was rising and displaying the beautiful avenues to great advantage. As they drove up to the door, the low pony carriage which had just set down Mrs. Forde and Edgar, was driving round to the stables.

Edgar had been met in the hall by a servant from Sir Guy's who brought the Sky terrier which Captain Bohun had promised him. The wicked looking creature was in a basket, and darted out its rough grizzled head, with its fierce red eyes and sharp teeth, to salute its new master by tearing the cuff of his coat, and barking so loud that Edgar could hardly make Mrs. Forde hear his catalogue of the dog's merits. She turned on the staircase to look at this amiable addition to their circle, and whether it was the vice of the little beast, or Edgar's high flown praises, she burst out laughing, just as the Manley party entered the hall. Her mirth was but of short duration, poor

thing! Before she had reached her own part of the house, every trace of merriment had faded from her cheek; but the Manleys had seen her—seen Mrs. Forde laughing; the very first time they had encountered her after the shocking events, and so forth! People who put the kindest construction upon every thing are, I am afraid, very rare; and when you do find them, I am still more afraid that they generally present a discouraging specimen of that species of sensual indolence of mind, which is naturally distinguished by very complete ignorance, and a large share of passive good-nature.

It is only in books that one finds people composed of all the virtues and none of the faults belonging to two or three classes of character. But to whatever class the Manleys belonged, they set off the next morning with a very high admiration for Leyton, and an exalted opinion of Leyton's mistress. It formed an agreeable and prominent item in their tour; and

there was a great deal connected with the visit to excite the curiosity and envy of their neighbours. They had seen Mrs. Forde, remember ! and so far were superior to any of the C— people : and the woman, whose surpassing beauty would never have drawn them across their thresholds, became, through her faults, an object of the deepest interest. But far higher, in their catalogue of wonders, stood the astounding fact that they had been under the same roof with Lord Bevis, the recluse, the wizard, the dwarf, the hunchback ; that he had turned out quite delightful and good-looking ; had taken Mrs. Manley in to dinner ; had talked with Miss Harriet, and had asked Miss Louisa for a song !

CHAPTER X.

FER.—Lady, there are as many shades in truth
 As shadows on the ever changing sea,
 Or tints among the evening clouds. The trace
 Of the king's signet on Parmenio's lip,
 Faded as soon as made, but bound him, ay
 To hold his master's secrets undivulged.
 Nor would I wrong the silence of my friend,
 By giving words to his unuttered will ;
 Because he hath not shackled my free speech
 With the coarse links of mutual promises.

ANON.

“ Do you know,” said Constance, one morning, to Lord Bevis as he was looking for a book in the library, “ do you know I think papa has some crotchet in his head about the operation.”

“ I should not wonder, Miss D'Oyley,”

said Lord Bevis, still engaged in his search.

“ There is not the least reason why he should not,” said Constance; “ Mr. A——’s last letter fixed some time about this month.”

“ Ay, indeed,” said Lord Bevis.

“ And what is more,” said Constance, “ if anything is going on, I am sure you are pretty well acquainted with it.”

“ I am the confidant, am I ? And can you tell me where you have hid the fourth volume of Milner’s Church History ?”

“ Oh ! I will find it. All the church books are here, to your left. Now you are not going away ; quite the contrary ; you are going to tell me all you know about papa’s proceedings ?”

“ Oh ! that reminds me, Miss D’Oyley, if you wish to see your purple passion-flower blow, this year——”

“ No, I don’t ; I care nothing about the purple passion-flower. I want to know papa’s and your secret.”

“ And all this time you are aware Mr. D'Oyley is waiting patiently in his study for this passage which I have come here to look out.”

“ I don't care about that either. I am waiting, but not patiently, for an answer.”

“ Always get your information first-hand, Miss D'Oyley. Suppose you ask your father about his plans.”

“ Now that is so like a man,” said Constance, “ so very stupid ; as if I should have asked you, unless I had my reasons for not asking papa ?”

“ And suppose I have my reasons for not telling tales, if I have any to tell ?”

“ Then I will not speak to you or be friends ever again,” said Constance.

Lord Bevis seemed to hold this threat very light ; he merely smiled, said he was sorry to displease her, and went into her father's study.

Constance kept her word religiously as to not being friends. All the time she

walked with her papa and mamma in the flower garden before luncheon, she replied to Lord Bevis in monosyllables, threw away some flowers he offered her, and declared that she would not ride with him that afternoon.

“What do you mean to do, then, my dear?” asked her father.

“Lord Bevis may ride with Edgar; I shall ride with Hart behind me, like a lady.”

Lord Bevis and Mr. D'Oyley both laughed at this announcement, and the former begged to know if he was in disgrace, and what was his misdemeanour.

“You know very well,” replied Constance, walking on.

“It would be such a relief to me if you would explain,” he said laughing.

“Why, Constance,” said her father, “I thought you never quarrelled with Lord Bevis.”

“Miss D'Oyley has begun to-day for an indefinite period,” said Lord Bevis.

“ He has been teasing me,” returned Constance.

“ Why, what is it all about ?” asked Mr. D'Oyley.

“ Dare I speak, Miss D'Oyley ?” asked Lord Bevis.

“ You will do just as you please,” returned Constance without turning her head.

Lord Bevis did not seem to please, and for a short time there was an interval of peace.

Then Constance said, as if to herself, “ I am going to write to Mary, this evening.”

“ Do you think you could spare half a page or so for me ?” asked Lord Bevis. “ I should very much like to add a few lines.”

“ No,” returned Constance ; “ I have a great deal to say to Mary. I mean to tell her how disagreeable you have become.”

“ I am so glad to hear it,” said Lord Bevis, “ because you may perhaps induce

Miss Hilton to come down here to witness such a phenomenon. It would be well worth the journey."

"It is of no use quarrelling with you, after all," said Constance.

"Are you come to that conclusion?" said Lord Bevis. "Pray shake hands upon it."

Constance consented to this, and moreover, half promised to ride with him that afternoon.

Just as she had rung for the horses, she was detained by the entrance of Lady Bohun with Captain Bohun.

Her Ladyship was quite as voluble as usual. She said Sir Guy had been complaining for some time—her usual phrase to express his being out of health—deplored that she was from home when Constance called last, rallied her upon the attentions of a certain Baronet, and called upon Captain Bohun to say whether or not she was a breaker of hearts.

He said he had no doubt of her power

to do so, but he was not so certain of her will.

Lady Bohun did not know ; but she thought Constance very formidable in that way, though she should say nothing. She hoped she did not mean to exercise her power upon a certain friend of hers ; she should have an opportunity of judging the next day. She hoped Constance did not forget that her archery meeting took place to-morrow.

No. Constance remembered it perfectly ; for the last week she had been practising very successfully.

“ But, good Heaven ! ” exclaimed Lady Bohun with a start, “ there is your carriage coming up to the door ; I am preventing some of you from going out driving. You mean to ride, I see ; but, Mrs. D'Oyley, I am shocked ! ”

Mrs. D'Oyley said it was a charity to put off her drive for half an hour, when the sun might have less power.

"True; what a glorious summer!" exclaimed Lady Bohun.

"Ay, Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis, "you will never have the face to complain of the weather again."

"Yes, I shall, the very next wet day," returned Constance.

They were all ready to start. Isabel who was to go out driving with Mrs. D'Oyley, had glided into the group. Lady Bohun insisted upon seeing them off; she liked to watch Constance mount her horse. Had she a horse to suit her? Was that the one Sir Morgan recommended to her?

"No," Constance said very shortly; "the horse Sir Morgan advised her to buy had only three legs."

"Oh, you wicked creature!" cried her Ladyship; "what a libel upon poor Sir Morgan."

"Yes," replied Constance; "if you take away from him that merit, I really don't know what you leave him."

“ Ah, when young ladies talk in that way,” said Lady Bohun, archly ; “ but what a beautiful hall this is ! I never pass through it but I think what a delightful *bal costumé* you might give ; but then I would confine my costume strictly to one reign. I would not have a medley, like a masquerade.”

Now as Lord Bevis handed Mrs. D'Oyley into the carriage, Captain Bohun could not do less for Mrs. Forde. He did not know what on earth to say to her as they stood on the steps ; so after an embarrassed pause, he turned round and said :

“ Do you find the heat too much for you, Miss Hernshaw ?”

He recollected his mistake immediately, and was annoyed at the blunder.

Isabel replied very quietly, that all weather was alike to her.

He attempted some apology for his awkward mistake—he had forgotten the lapse of time.

“ It was very natural,” said Isabel. “ I

cannot so easily forget all I forfeited with my name."

Any one would have been touched by her manner, it was so sad and quiet. Captain Bohun showed that he was so by the way in which he placed her in the carriage and arranged her cloaks. A great deal can be expressed by trifles !

And so Constance thought, as she stood waiting for her horse to be brought up to the steps. She declined his offered assistance, said her brother was always her page, took the reins from Edgar, and rode off with a smile and a bow, as if she was the happiest person on the face of the earth.

"How glad I am they are all gone," said Edgar, when they were outside the park gates. "How I do hate morning visitors."

"So do I," said Constance.

"What, all morning visitors?" asked Lord Bevis.

"Yes, all," returned Constance. "If people want to see me, I should like them to

come in the evening ; I choose to have the morning to myself."

" There was I waiting and waiting," said Edgar in an injured tone, " and the pony growing so fidgety ; and as for your horse, I should not wonder if he were to throw you over his head. He can't bear standing."

" We must take our chance," said Constance. " Pray do you go to the archery, to-morrow ?"

" Who—I ?" said Lord Bevis. " Pray Miss D'Oyley, what should I do at an archery meeting ?"

" Why, look at the people, and make cynical remarks."

" Very pleasant, I agree with you, for ten minutes ; but I have no mind to play Timon from noon to midnight."

" It is too long, certainly," said Edgar.

" You will not say so when you have on your green doublet and the brown beaver hat with the feathers. I'll let you wear

that on one side," said Constance. "You will find the time only too short!"

Edgar didn't know that he should; and for some little time they rode on in silence.

"After all," exclaimed Constance, pulling up so short as to startle the horses of her two companions, "after all, I know when it is to be."

Lord Bevis looked at her with some little surprise.

"I asked papa to go to H—— with me next week, to choose some books, and he said, 'Not next week, my dear; it won't quite suit me.' I dare say, he has fixed next Monday for Dr. A——."

"Well then, suppose we say Monday," said Lord Bevis. "We don't mean to quarrel any more. Monday is a good day enough; I see no objection to it."

"You might just as well have told me at first," said Constance, "because I don't mean to agitate myself about it. It is a very little thing, and will restore papa to

so many blessings. I am sure I have prayed for it night and day," said she, melting at every word more and more; "and I do not mean to fear it at all."

And then she began to cry in good earnest.

"Now, my dear Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis, "don't you see the wisdom as well as the kindness of your father in trying to conceal the exact time of his trial. But there are five days before Monday: you have no need to think of it yet. Let us have a gallop across the common."

Constance agreed to the gallop; it dispersed her tears and restored her usual spirits, while Edgar puzzled himself, without coming to any exact conclusion, as to what made girls so ready to cry.

CHAPTER XI.

Well decked in a frock of grey,
Hey ho ! grey is greet !
And in a kirtle of green, say
The green is for maidens meet.
A chaplet on her head she wore,
Hey ho ! chaplet
Of sweet violets therein was store,
She sweeter than the violet.

SPENSER.

CLO.—Still I swear I love you.

IMO.—If you but said so, 'twere as deep with me :

If you swear still, your recompense is still
That I regard it not.

CYMBELINE.

“ To be sure, she does look very nice, Mr. D'Oyley,” said Mrs. Agatha, surveying Constance with undisguised admiration; “ though if she blushes so deeply at my praise, I really don't know—”

“ I hope it will be a long time before my little girl leaves off blushing,” said Mr. D'Oyley, taking Constance by the hand ; “ but I dare say she looks very well.”

“ You have no idea, papa, what a pretty hat I have on,” said Constance, as she stood with some embarrassment in her archery dress, waiting for the carriage that was to convey her to Lady Bohun's. “ Lord Bevis invented the costume.”

“ Only copied it, Miss D'Oyley,” said Lord Bevis. “ But I am rejoiced to see it turn out so well ; you could not look better.”

“ No, that I could not, if I tried,” said Constance, laughing. “ But come, Edgar, here is my bow for you to carry. Mamma is ready, and the carriage at the door.”

Nothing could exceed Lady Bohun's rapture at the taste Constance had displayed, as much in her costume as in having Edgar as a page to carry her bow. “ Though,” she said, “ you are a tantalising creature to advance your brother to

a post of honour which would make so many people happy."

Constance denied the accuracy of this remark, and inquired after Sir Guy.

"Complaining, as usual," replied Lady Bohun; "but he never interferes with me. He is in the house somewhere, I believe. He fancied there was a cold wind to-day; did you ever hear anything so ridiculous?"

"I shall talk him out of the idea," said Constance. "Whereabouts shall I find him?"

"Oh! that I cannot even imagine. In the drawing-room, perhaps; or shivering in the hot-house, and counting the bunches of grapes; that is one of his favourite morning amusements."

Constance summoned Edgar, and went in search of Sir Guy. To say the truth, one of her reasons for this step was that she had just seen Sir Morgan enter the grounds. One of the gardeners told her that Sir Guy was in the conservatory. She went in, and was not a little embar-

passed to find him in close conversation with his nephew. It really seemed as if she had been in search of Captain Bohun, she thought ; she felt vexed and angry, and put as much coldness as possible in her reply to his greeting.

Yes, she thanked him, her father was tolerable. Oh, for herself, she was as well as anybody could be this hot weather.

Captain Bohun passed on to speak to Edgar, and Constance began her errand to Sir Guy.

“ I thought you were quite alone, Sir Guy,” she said ; “ and I meant to persuade you that it was a much better thing to come out in the lawn with me and see the shooting ; will you ? The sun is only too hot.”

Sir Guy hesitated ; the wind was north-east, he was sure.

Constance suggested that there was no wind at all.

Well, he did not know. He thought he

would go for a short time. He should like to see Constance shoot.

“ Will you bet upon me, Sir Guy?” asked Constance.

Sir Guy laughed, and begged to know whether she was the favourite, and if any body could be found who would take his bet ; and likewise how long it would be before her turn came, because he did not think he could manage to stay long out of doors.

Constance contrived to amuse him and keep him by her side, and Edgar waited on her with bow and quiver, and Captain Bohun was on the other side of her, so that when Sir Morgan came up, he was unable to be very particular in his attentions. In due time she was summoned to the trial ; but it was a matter of such perfect indifference to her that she did not even put forth her usual skill. She let fly her three arrows with as much *sang froid* as if she were shooting at a hedge,

and scarcely looking to see where they lighted, she turned round and went back to Sir Guy.

“ There,” she said, as she left her last arrow quivering in the target a few inches from the bull’s eye, “ you don’t know what you have saved by not betting on my success.”

“ You had a very narrow escape that last time, my dear,” said Sir Guy, raising his glass. “ Bless me ! the wind’s rising.”

“ No, the wind has you in proper consideration ; and a miss is as good as a mile, all the world over. You are richer by a dozen of gloves than you might have been,” said Constance.

“ For my part,” exclaimed Sir Morgan, “ I would rather lose by you, than win by betting on any one else !”

“ Thank you,” said Constance. “ Now step over to Miss Compton, the lady who has won the prize, and say just the same thing ‘ with variations.’ It will answer quite as well. ‘ You would rather have

lost by her success, than won by that of any one else.' "

Sir Morgan avowed he would rather perish than transfer to another the expression of his feelings ; which announcement diverted Constance so highly that she sat down by Sir Guy and laughed without restraint.

Sir Morgan leaning on his bow, whispered to Constance that he feared she had no heart.

" Oh ! yes, I have," said Constance ;
" so have you. A horse has a heart. It is a vital organ !"

Sir Morgan, not knowing what to reply to this, stood biting the feathers from one of his arrows, and trying to look dejected.

And now that the shooting was over, the next thing, of course, that people had to do was to eat. Sir Guy rising, and blessing himself that he would soon be under shelter, made a sign to his nephew to take in Constance. " There," he said, " you two

young people find your way in doors together. I will follow you."

"Well," exclaimed Constance, "that is too bad. You are my property altogether this morning. I do think you should give me your arm in to breakfast, should he not?" said she, looking at Captain Bohun.

"Certainly," he said. "He could not think of interfering with his uncle's claims."

Sir Guy was very well pleased at the preference shown him by Constance, who little as she knew it, was quite the lion of the *fête*; so she carried him off in triumph.

The ladies discussed her appearance as she passed; of course she was too dark to please some, and too light to please others. Some thought her spirits forced; others were sure that a town milliner made her kirtle. Some wondered why she shot at all if she could not shoot better; and others could not think how she managed to get those odd white kid hawking gloves.

The elder ladies thought she was a very bad card player, to be so cold and silent

to young Captain Bohun, when it was so very evident that his old uncle was breaking fast, unless indeed she had an eye to the young Lord Alfred G— who was present with his tutor, or the Prince with the impossible name, with whom Lady Bohun was so very, very friendly.

Now Sir Morgan thought naturally that the impression he had already made upon Constance was quite completed by the costume he wore. He thought himself a second and very improved edition of Robin Hood. It was an opportunity not to be lost. She might be able to refuse him, but who could refuse his green and silver doublet, and the long cock's feathers in his hat? So he determined to stand the hazard of the die before they parted that evening. He was unable to obtain a place next to her at the breakfast, and to his great dismay, when as soon as dancing was proposed, he went up to secure her hand, she said she did not mean to dance, and desired Edgar to bring her hat, for she was

going with a party to row on the canal. The party was formed, and there was no room for Sir Morgan in the boat. He would willingly have swamped it, so that he could have secured her ; and he saw Captain Bohun hand her in, and arrange her shawls as he took his place beside her, with feelings so very evil that he fancied them to be sublime.

Sir Morgan's only plan now, was to lay wait for the return of the rowing party, which he did. Constance stepped back to the boat after she had left it, for her shawl. Sir Morgan seized it and begged to be allowed to put it on. She granted this request, but told him to make haste, for the dew was falling, and she wished to go into the house. He wrapped the cachemere round her, and then assured her that the evening air was too soft to be dangerous, and that her life was more precious to him than his own.

Constance replied with a laugh, which

had a little touch of scorn in it, that it was not a question of lives, and hurried after the rest of her party. But Sir Morgan placed himself in her way ; it was a narrow path, through a shrubbery, and she could not conveniently proceed.

“ Well—now,” she said, looking all astonishment.

Sir Morgan burst all at once into a rhapsody so very unconnected that it would have been difficult to gather from his words alone that he was anxious to obtain her hand. But as he caught hold of it, and pressed it not very gently while he poured out this torrent of nonsense, Constance was able to apprehend his intentions.

In vain she tried to release her hand, or to interrupt his professions. It was only when having called her, for the fourteenth time, an angel, and entreated her to pronounce his doom, declaring at the same time that he felt by the sympathy which existed between them that he could not be

wholly indifferent to her, and talking of awakening the echoes of her heart, that he paused to take breath, and Constance was able to check the abundance of his eloquence.

“Oh! for shame, Sir Morgan!” she said. “Is it not unworthy of your birth and condition, to wrong yourself by uttering such falsehoods? You, who I believe, would disdain to swerve by a hair’s breadth from truth when you address a man, to care nothing about the accuracy of your professions to a woman! Is it not strange that your honour never suggests to you that truth is more absolutely demanded from the strong to the weak, than between two equal parties? I would rather lie to my blind father, than tamper as you do, with the blind dependence which a woman too often places on the false words of your sex! For shame! Be silent! You cannot even *feign* to love me! Let me pass!”

And she *did* pass; leaving Sir Morgan so extremely astonished that he could neither reply nor follow. He contented himself with confounding her "clear spirit," and took himself off to his own house.

Her carriage was drawing up as she reached the hall door. Captain Bohun looked earnestly at her as he handed her in; but he was not very likely to obtain an explanation of her flushed cheek and sparkling eye. They were driving up the avenue, when they saw Lord Bevis hastening towards them. Mrs. D'Oyley uttered an exclamation of terror, and caught her daughter's hand.

"Oh! my dear! your father. Something is the matter. Let me out!" she exclaimed.

Constance stopped the carriage, and opened the door.

"You frighten us all!" said she, "quick—what is it?"

He was the bearer of good news. Mr.

D'Oyley had submitted to the operation in their absence, with every prospect of being restored to the blessing of sight.

CHAPTER XII.

Sol può dir che sia contento
 Chi penò gran tempo in vano
 Dal suo ben chi fu lontano
 E lo tornò a riveder.

METASTASIO.

CH.—Sooner shut
 Old Time into a den and stay his motion ;
 Wash off the swift hours from his downy wings,
 Or steal Eternity to stop his glass
 Than shut the sweet Idea I have within me.

* * * * *

One joy shall make us smile, and one grief mourn :
 One age go with us, and one hour of death
 Shall shut our eyes, and one grave make us happy.

ANG.—And one hand seal the match. I'm your's for
 ever.

THE ELDER BROTHER.

FROM that moment, Constance devoted herself entirely to her father. She was rarely absent from his room. Lord Bevis went to London in a few days ; after being

assured that Mr. D'Oyley was going on perfectly well. Constance wrote the most earnest and pressing invitation to Mary and her uncle to return to Leyton with Lord Bevis; she said she should be angry with every body, if Mary was not married from her house. Lord Bevis said that if she would join the party, he would do all he could to persuade Miss Hilton to accede to her wishes.

“I dare say!” exclaimed Constance, “I should like to know who I am to find upon so short a notice!”

“Look about the neighbourhood while I am gone; far and near,” said Lord Bevis. “There is Captain Bohun, and Sir Morgan, and Mr. Sedley;—he is a widower, is not he? You are fond of the church.”

“I am not,” said Constance, “not in particular, I mean; but I never take advice. So good bye to you.”

For the first few days, Captain Bohun called regularly to inquire after Mr. D'Oyley. On these occasions, he saw Mrs.

D'Oyley and Isabel. Constance was always with her father ; but about the fifth day his inquiries were interrupted by a circumstance which nobody expected to happen so soon. Sir Guy, who had been *complaining* for a short time past, rather more than usual, left off this habit altogether—he died.

Constance heard, among the gossip incidental to a country neighbourhood, that Colonel Bohun had come to take possession, and that Captain Bohun had resigned his commission, and was placed high upon the dowager's books, as one of the matches of the county. She never asked Isabel what had passed during those visits when she was with her father ; but she judged, from Mrs. Forde's amended looks and spirits, that she was well contented with his attentions.

She had a letter from Mary to say that her father and herself would be with them at Leyton, as soon as Mr. D'Oyley was about again. Lord Bevis also assumed, as

he said, the privilege of a relation, and wrote frequent accounts to her of his, and Miss Hilton's proceedings ; and Constance returned the compliment by giving him very circumstantial accounts of her father's progress, and particularly detailing all that he said and thought when he first saw her again. She declared that he thought her grown a little taller, and much prettier ; and that he admired Mrs. Agatha as much as she did herself.

Edgar was returned to school, much to her discomfort : he was a great pet of hers ; and now that she had the power, Mr. D'Oyley was obliged seriously to caution her against gratifying every wish which he formed.

One day, Mrs. D'Oyley and Isabel were taking their accustomed morning drive together, and Constance felt that the fine bright afternoon was hers, to spend or idle, as she liked. She felt quite happy. Her father had been walking a little in the garden, and had been admiring the flowers

and the trees, and the whole scene so much, and had been looking at her tame deer, and her pouter pigeons, and Edgar's fancy rabbits : her own flower-garden, with its old sun dial, had never appeared to her eyes drest in such brilliant colours. She pushed open the little gate that led into the park, and wandered out under the trees.

There are many moments when we would rather be alone, even with our happiness ; silence and solitude are needful to make us enjoy and understand our feelings.

“ How thankful I ought to feel,” she thought, “ for the comforts with which I am surrounded : to see papa restored to sight, and to have the means of doing good to others. No one can tell how disagreeable it is to want money till they have tried it. How very little I ought to regret that Captain Bohun prefers Isabel ! I have no right to expect everything. I have done nothing to deserve a better lot than others, to have exactly my own way. I only wish,

and that is not very unreasonable, that it were all settled, instead of having to wait as long as he must before he proposes for her. Why, he is never coming here with Tim ! fishing I suppose ? What a stupid boy it is !” she exclaimed, as Tim having thrown open the gate and pointed to Constance, swung it to again and returned towards the house.

She could not do less than come forward to meet him as he advanced.

“ I am glad to see you at last,” said Captain Bohun ; “ you have been shutting yourself up for a long time.”

“ Yes,” said Constance, smiling ; “ papa and I have come out together.”

“ Need I say how warmly I rejoice with you in Mr. D'Oyley's recovery,” said Captain Bohun : “ although I expected it, I feel it almost as an agreeable surprise now that it has taken place.”

“ So do I,” said Constance ; “ but papa saved us a great deal of nervousness. Perhaps you know how he did so ?”

"Mrs. D'Oyley told me," returned Captain Bohun.

"Don't you think Isabel has improved wonderfully in all this time?" asked Constance.

"Yes."

"She is as beautiful as ever, now."

"True."

"And do you know she has begun to ride with me? She rides my dark chestnut!"

"Indeed."

"It has done her so much good."

"I dare say—"

"And you know she was always a perfect horsewoman!"

"Was she?"

Constance looked at him a moment with her eyebrows raised, and then walked on.

"But we are going the wrong way," said she.

"Were you not going to the canal?" he asked.

"I believe I was ; at least I may as well."

“ Did you have that old oak felled ?”

“ No. I could not make up my mind to it. Indeed, I half promised Lord Bevis that I would let it stand for him to draw it.”

“ Do you expect him to return to you soon ?”

“ Yes. And Mary and uncle Hilton are to come down to see papa. Lord Bevis is gone to London on business.”

“ So is my father,” said Captain Bohun, “ or he would have accompanied me to-day. I should have had great pleasure in making him known to you.”

“ Oh ! but I have seen Colonel, I mean Sir Reginald Bohun, at uncle Hilton's. It would have been very needful, I am sure, to present me to him, but I remember him perfectly well : and that reminds me that I have not asked after Lady Bohun.”

“ She is very well.”

“ Now that is not a proper answer, you know,” said Constance, looking up at him.

“Will you teach me what I ought to say?” he asked, with a smile, “because I really believed her Ladyship to be in very good health.”

“Oh! you should say: she is getting on a little; or, I am happy to say, poor thing, she is regaining her spirits by degrees; or, I do not think she is quite so low as she was last week! But to talk of being very well, it will not do at all.”

“She has a very good jointure,” said Captain Bohun, quietly; “I am not at all aware of anything that should make her ill.”

“Now I will tell you of a very great fault of your’s,” said Constance. “When you dislike persons, you really do despise them so much!”

“You have the advantage of me,” said he, “I do not know any fault that you have, which I could tell you of in return.”

Constance was rather embarrassed by this remark. She began throwing pebbles

in the water to startle the fish, and she pointed out several fine trout as they darted about the stream.

“ I wonder what Edgar would say to me,” she exclaimed, “ for disturbing his fish ? He looks on them all as his particular property, made on purpose for him to catch.”

“ Is he as fond of angling as he was ?”

“ Not quite. He has taken it into his head now, that he wants to be a soldier. So like a silly boy !”

“ You do not mean to give your consent then ?”

“ No. I shall not send him among a parcel of people with more leisure than learning, and more money than wit. Oh ! dear, what a blunder I have made ; I ought to beg your pardon.”

“ I am not one of them, now,” said Captain Bohun, smiling.

“ Oh ! I had forgotten ; Isabel told me you had left the army. I congratulate you. You are a gentleman at large, ready to be

Prime Minister, as Lady Alton would say, on the first opportunity."

"I am not quite so ambitious," said Captain Bohun.

"Perhaps, on the whole that is as well," said Constance, archly. "Premierships don't fall vacant every day."

"At least, my ambition is of a different nature," he said, with some agitation, "though it may be as impossible to attain."

Constance, who immediately thought of Isabel, turned very pale and dizzy for a moment; but so completely were her thoughts engrossed by the supposed allusion that it never occurred to her to conceal them.

"I don't think so at all," said she; "I am almost sure it is not impossible; although, how much would have been saved if you had thought as you do now, when I first knew you. And though you cannot talk about it for a long time to come, yet it must be a great pleasure to know that you are not at all forgotten."

.. It would not be easy to describe the ex-

treme astonishment depicted on her companion's features while she spoke, but she did not observe it; she was gazing down into the water as it glided past her feet.

“ Indeed,” she continued, “ I cannot but feel great satisfaction when I think how much more worthily Isabel will bestow her regard a second time, if—that is—if my conjectures are right.”

“ Isabel !” he exclaimed, stepping back a pace.

Constance for the first time raised her eyes, and met his look of undiminished wonder.

“ Mrs. Forde !” he repeated.

Constance coloured very highly, and looked very frightened.

“ I am sure, I hope I have said nothing. I understood—indeed,” said she, almost ready to cry, “ I am afraid I did not understand—”

“ I fear not,” he said. “ I might, indeed, think that you would receive my homage with coldness, but I had not anticipated that

you would have ascribed my devotions to
—Mrs. Forde !”

She had never heard him speak so haughtily before ; she wrapped her scarf round her, and walked on in offended silence.

“ We have both been making mistakes,” he said, after a pause. “ Your’s is very trifling and very easily explained. I have a very cordial aversion to Mrs. Forde ; it would be a satisfaction to me never to see her again. My error is destined to embitter my whole life.”

Constance stopped, and listened with eyes dilated and lips apart ; but still silent.

“ I have never ceased to love you,” he continued, “ and I had hoped, that when your father regained his sight, one obstacle to my success might have been removed. I had even ventured to think sometimes that you had understood my silence ;—I am undeceived.”

Constance walked on again, her heart beating fast ; but proudly and silently.

“For that matter,” she thought, “he does not understand *me*! I have as great a right to be angry as he has;—if he chooses to give me up for a mistake, it is very well.”

And yet to find that he had remained true to the impression she had made upon him, that all this while she had bewildered herself in assigning his regard to the wrong person, afforded her so much delight, that her anger fast disappeared. Still it was not for her to say so; surely not for her to explain, until she was asked for an explanation.

They walked on silently until they reached the little garden gate. He stepped forward and endeavoured to open it for her; but there was something peculiar in the latch, and he could not get it undone.

“Oh! you know nothing about it,” said Constance. “Let me come; I will show you how to unfasten it.”

She opened the latch, and stood with the gate in her hand.

"But this is not the shortest way," said she, "all through the shrubberies. If you take the path across the green, it will save you, I should think, a quarter of a mile, if you are in such a hurry to get home."

He had not shown any particular hurry to get home; and he could not suppress a smile.

"I wish you would show me something I am much more anxious to know—something of your heart;" he said.

"I don't—I cannot tell—" stammered Constance. "I thought—I took it into my head—I made a mistake—"

"You thought I preferred that disastrous woman to yourself," said he, very gently. "Could you wrong me so much?"

"And when you went to Southampton?" said she, smiling, yet fixing her eyes on the ground.

"I thought it just possible that two ladies not very much used to travelling might meet with some trifling impediment,

and so I preferred being at hand in case of accidents."

Constance raised her eyes to his face, and then dropped them again.

"And is that all that stands between us, dearest?" he whispered.

Constance did not say, no.

They had a great deal to explain to each other. In the first place they had to say it all over again two or three times: a practice peculiar, I should suppose, to lovers and persons of a very advanced age.

However, when it was all said, Constance looked at her watch and found it wanted about two minutes to dinner time.

"How comes it to be so late?" said she; "it is all your fault. Do you know, as Sir Reginald is in town, I think you had better stay to dinner."

Her companion accepted this invitation with great alacrity; and hinted that the absence of Sir Reginald would have made no difference in his readiness to do so.

"Don't be wicked," said Constance ;
"because I should have certainly sent you
off, had your father been at home. Are
you come after me, my dear Mrs. Agatha?
I have been wasting my time at such a
shocking rate, this fine day, that I am not
dressed for dinner ; but I dare say you will
excuse it."

"Why, my dear, it would be a strange
waste of time indeed to dress for an old
woman," said Mrs. Agatha ; "but your papa
could not think what had become of you,
so I offered my services to find you out."

Constance felt a slight pang when she
thought of Isabel ; but she hoped that, as
she had misinterpreted Captain Bohun's
feelings, she might also have mistaken
those which she had attributed to her.

They entered the house through the con-
servatory. Mrs. Agatha went first, and
Constance lingered a moment behind.

"It is all very well," said she, looking
up to Captain Bohun, and trying to laugh

while she blushed deeper and deeper ; “ but what am I to say to papa ? ”

“ I don't think he will be very much surprised,” said Captain Bohun, smiling.

“ Oh ! you have been beforehand with me ; very well,” said she, as they went in.

Mrs. Forde was in the drawing-room with Mrs. D'Oyley. She saw Captain Bohun shake hands with Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley ; but she did not detect a more than usual warmth in his manner, and it never had occurred to her as a possible thing that he should become attached to Constance.

She was quite puzzled therefore to see him draw his chair close to her's in the evening, just as Lord Bevis used to do, and offer to help her in the manufacture of the tea and coffee.

Still more was she surprised to see that Constance, though occasionally lively in her replies, for the most part sat silent, blushing and smiling at his half whispered

remarks, and making some slight pretence of netting meanwhile.

"And who is that purse for at last, my dear?" asked Mrs. Agatha.

Captain Bohun whispered something, and Constance laughed.

"I must finish it a little better than I have begun, or it will be fit for nobody," said she. "Just look at this last row; that is because you were talking to me!"

"You half promised it to Lord Bevis," said her father.

"I have changed my mind," said Constance. "It is not good enough for him. You may take out those few last stitches, while I sing you a song."

Mrs. Agatha relieved Captain Bohun of his task, at which he did not seem to be very expert, and he followed Constance to the piano.

"I am going to sing something very pretty, but rather old," said she; "one of Mary's favourites; no, I think, Isabel, you used to like it."

She heard a rustle—a slight sigh—she sprang from the piano, but not in time to save Isabel from falling. She sank from her chair upon the ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

Thus even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips.

KING LEAR.

The end crowns all ;
And that old common arbitrator Time
Will one day end it.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

So he has thrived
That he is promised to be wived
To fair Marina.

PERICLES.

" I did not think, young ladies," said Mrs. D'Oyley, looking round the circle, " that I had been half so important a person."

Mary had just arrived with her father and Lord Bevis ; and it chanced that Lord Bevis was beside her on the sofa, and

Captain Bohun leaning on the priedieu chair in which Constance was seated.

Mr. Hilton laughed, and said that few young ladies would have put off certain arrangements for the same reason ; but his Mary was a very decided little body.

He looked so very proudly at his Mary while he spoke, that Constance was quite surprised. She did not yet know that people generally see with other people's eyes.

Captain Bohun whispered to Constance, that Miss Hilton was not the only person who had kept other people in suspense until her father's recovery was decided.

Constance replied that he knew nothing about her motives ; perhaps she had a great many other reasons, and perhaps he would go and look out of the window to see if Mrs. Agatha was coming.

Then when Mrs. Agatha came, she made Captain Bohun take her in to dinner, and sat quite on the other side of the table, by

Sir Reginald, and pretended not to hear when Captain Bohun asked her to take wine, (for in those days people took wine with one another); and tried to tease him, but without success, in a great many other little ways.

Mary, who sat grave, calm, and silent, could scarcely imagine how Constance could jest so gaily when she was happy. She could laugh off disagreeable things, but there was a depth of repose in her content, which was utterly distinct from mirth.

But then there was a thousand fold more sentiment in Mary than in Constance, though nobody could be made to believe so, by reason of all those heavy curls that Constance wore, dropping low down, and breaking here and there into bright tendrils which rested on her neck.

After dinner, Mary and Constance went out walking together in the park, and took that opportunity to tell each other all that

had happened since they parted. They were not allowed to enjoy their *tête-à-tête* very long, for before they had quite exhausted their several subjects, they were joined by their respective lovers.

Mary stretched out her hand to Lord Bevis when she saw him, and finished what she was saying to her cousin ; but Constance told Captain Bohun that she wished him farther, and that she was talking secrets, and that it was very ill-mannered of him to interrupt her, and that she should tell Sir Reginald ; and that Sir Reginald always took her part ; which was true enough.

Constance was as much amused with Sir Reginald, as she had been with Sir Guy. He was a great fidget ; and like many elderly men, fond of the society of young ladies. Constance and Mary were very frequently with him.

He was almost a stranger to his home ; for he had scarcely ever left his regiment for a week together, under the impression,

as Mary used to say, that it would melt away like Alladin's palace, if he was not continually looking at it.

In the morning, he used to come bustling down to Leyton to know if they were going to ride ; and when they had ridden, he was anxious to know what they were going to do with themselves until luncheon ; and directly luncheon was over, he was in a hurry for them to come and see his improvements ; and he would walk them remorselessly about his plantations until dinner time.

Constance said to him one day, that as she must have two fathers now, she would rather have him than any body else :—a remark which he repeated to every one far and near, in the belief that it was singularly witty.

He was very happy digging and planting trees, under the idea that they would grow much better than those planted by any body else ; and he liked to have Constance and Mary standing by him all the time

talking to him. Captain Bohun took leave to add himself to the party whenever he could ; and sometimes when Sir Reginald was very busily engaged, he stole Constance away into the shrubberies ; and then nobody could be quite sure when they would be visible again.

And now Isabel felt, with terrible force, all that she had inflicted upon others, in her heedless and unprincipled career. Unused to suppress her feelings, and, indeed, unacquainted with the controlling power which thought can exercise over emotion, she knew no better than to conceal her sufferings ; she had no means of diminishing them. She returned to her first love with an abandonment that surprised herself, and would still more have astonished Constance, who could not comprehend a woman loving where her affection was unsought.

It was misery to her to be present when Constance and Captain Bohun were together. Yet she could not bear to be

absent, picturing to herself all, and more than all, the regard expressed in their manner to each other. She tormented herself by joining their parties incessantly and witnessing the content she could no longer interrupt. Her pride might be hurt by seeing that Lord Bevis had transferred his regard to another ; but her heart was crushed by the defection of Captain Bohun. She was constantly in company with two men who had been her devoted slaves, but who had receded from her unworthiness, and now paid to character, the homage they had once offered to beauty.

True ; she had thrown them off in the first instance ; but they had shown no disposition to return to her feet. Lord Bevis had always treated her with a calm kindness, which showed more fully than a more distant manner, that the past had left no trace of regret or anger on his mind. The coldness of Captain Bohun she had ascribed to pique, and had thought it might be vanquished by time ; but now that he had

secured the hand of Constance, nothing could be more gentle and considerate than his behaviour towards her. She could not disguise from herself the mortifying conclusion that he had regarded her with such strong symptoms of dislike, because he looked upon her as dangerous to the peace of Constance, rather than because he could not forgive her fickle treatment of himself.

Mrs. Agatha was very frequently with her, and Isabel would often spend hours at her cottage, and would startle the kind old lady not a little by frequent and prolonged bursts of hysterical tears, or by equally distressing fits of excited gaiety. The only thing that gave tranquillity to her excited feelings was the luxury of riding. An accomplished horsewoman, she who was so timid in most cases, never knew fear on horseback. No animal was too fleet or too wild for her to manage. She would outstrip all her companions, and take a road that would lead her farther

than they were likely to go, and come home almost as soon as they could, with her horse in a condition that would make the grooms look grave, but without appearing in the slightest degree fatigued by her exertions. Constance never suffered a word of remonstrance to be addressed to her for these fancies ; she would rather that every horse in the stable were spoilt, than that Isabel should be deprived of a pleasure that seemed to do her so much good, so long as there was no danger to herself in the practice.

One sunny morning, early in September, a very few mornings before that which was to witness the transfer of Mary and Constance to their respective masters, they were all to go out on one of their long exploring rides, a sort of roving expedition, in which they got entangled among narrow lanes and thick hedgerows, where none of them knew the way forward nor the way back, and they were obliged to trust to

the chance of meeting some shepherd or equally rustic person, to enable them ever to reach their home again.

Now Constance, on this occasion, tried very hard to persuade Lord Bevis and Captain Bohun to go out shooting ; and when they persisted in declining this pastime, she used all her endeavours to coax Sir Reginald to ride with them. But Sir Reginald said it was quite out of the question, because he had a great deal to do that morning, and had only just time enough at his disposal to come over and ask how they all were ; and he hinted into the bargain that Constance did not really wish for his company, but that she was a little coquette, and liked to make Reginald feel himself of no importance to her.

So the ladies went up to dress, and the gentlemen waited their pleasure below. At last Constance came down in a great hurry.

“ You who make a merit of dressing so quickly,” said Captain Bohun, “ do you

know how long you have been absent? I was half afraid you meant to disappoint me."

"Why, that I might very likely have done," said Constance, "but I could not bear, as Tony Lumpkin says, to disappoint myself. I am so fond of riding. But the fact is this, Lord Bevis, Grey Chepstow is lame."

"Wonderful, is it not?" said Lord Bevis to Captain Bohun.

"Very," he replied. "I am only astonished that she has not lamed every horse in your stable."

"That is just like your ill-nature," said Constance. "Isabel knows how to ride."

"More shame for her, then," said Captain Bohun, "for bringing in her horses in such a condition."

"It is very barbarous, you know, Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis. "Observe the way Miss Hilton rides."

"Well," said Constance, "I did not think you were going to be disagreeable

this morning ; I thought you would have offered Isabel your gentle horse, the Arab with the beautiful little head."

" I shall be only too happy," said Lord Bevis, " if Mrs. Forde is not afraid for herself. The creature is perfectly quiet ; only, for her own sake as well as for mine, she must not dash off at her usual rate, for these Arabs, so quiet at a moderate pace, are apt to warm to their work, and become frantic if you gallop them hard."

" You do very often," said Constance.

" Very true," said Lord Bevis ; " but I flatter myself I have rather a better hand on my rein than Mrs. Forde."

" Well, she will not want to go fast this time," said Constance. " But riding is so essential to her, that I do not like her to miss a day if I can help it."

There was a crystal clearness in the air, and a gentle wind just ruffled the deep green leaves on the trees. . The horses tossed their heads and pawed the ground, impatient to be off,

“ Recollect, Mrs. Forde, I entreat you,” said Lord Bevis, “ that you do not press your horse forward. I am willing to admit that you need no caution with an English horse, but you are not used to these Arabs.”

“ He seems perfectly quiet,” said Mrs. Forde, stroking the arched neck of the slender creature as he stood wavering at the steps. “ I have no fear of anything but vice. I dare say he does not kick.”

“ I do not think he knows how,” said Lord Bevis as he arranged her habit. “ Now, Miss Hilton, I am at your service.”

“ Do you know this road, Sir ?” asked Constance.

“ Why will you call me, ‘ Sir ?’ Yes, that turning will take you to H——”

“ It will, indeed, if you follow it,” said Constance ; “ it takes you a complete circuit from Leyton all round to the other side of H——. Don’t you remember that expedition of ours, when we were all taken

very hungry, and stopped to buy cakes at a cottage ?”

“ You and Miss Hilton were reduced to eat those cakes. I don't think we came in for a share.”

“ Oh, true ! you men are never hungry. Is that heath like Scotland ? You know I have never travelled anywhere.”

“ The heath may be, but not the surrounding country. I am sure you will be pleased with the Trosachs.”

“ No doubt I shall. Do you like Scotch songs ?”

“ When you sing them, I do very much.”

“ How kind you are this morning. Will you gather me that branch of honeysuckle ? How late it blows. Thank you. Why cannot I make my horse go close to the side of the hedge when I wish to gather anything ?”

“ I cannot tell. It may be the fault of your horse ; it may be—”

“ My fault, I suppose. Now, am I holding my reins properly ? ”

“ Rather too short. Does it not tire you to stretch out your hand so far ? ”

“ Yes, but if he should stumble ? ”

“ Never ride him again, then ; he has no business to stumble. ”

“ Will you hold my reins while I make up this honeysuckle into a nosegay ? ”

“ With pleasure. ”

“ Do you love flowers ? ”

“ Yes, I have a great fondness for them. ”

“ I will let you have this beautiful piece of honeysuckle to wear in your coat. ”

“ Thank you ; perhaps you will put it in for me, as I cannot let go your bridle. ”

Constance leaned from her saddle, and fastened the flower in his dress. At that moment, Mrs. Forde's horse dashed past them at full speed, with red nostril widely dilated, and eyes rolling. Mary always thought that, while engaged in watching

Constance and Captain Bohun, she had forgotten the advice of Lord Bevis, and had struck her horse impatiently ; but that they never knew.

Constance snatched her bridle, and urged him by signs to make haste.

“ Follow her ! forward ! quick ! ” she cried, waving her hand. “ She cannot be thrown—she will not be hurt ? ” she exclaimed, looking eagerly in his face.

“ No, no ; I hope not ; I’ll see. Wait for me,” he said, as he set spurs to his horse.

He was not swift enough. She kept him in sight too long ; the lane turned abruptly into the high road, and then she could see neither him nor Isabel. Lord Bevis and Mary were far on in front. She had dropped her whip, and though she tried to urge her horse forward, she fancied she made but little progress. She gained the high road, as I said, on the sudden ; Captain Bohun was riding fast towards her.

“ Keep back, for Heaven’s sake ! ” he

exclaimed. "You can do no good ; it is no sight for you ; keep back."

He caught at her bridle as he spoke, but she slipped from her horse, and ran forward. A heap of dark clothes lay on the road, and close beside, the Arab was feeding quietly from the scanty patches of grass that grew on the wayside.

Lord Bevis was supporting the head—a dark streak on the forehead and a broken branch near, from an overhanging tree, told the story.

Constance snatched the form of Isabel to her bosom, and pressed the cold cheek to hers. She looked with all the hopeless horror of conviction upon the half-closed glazing eye, and pale, parted lips. A few short, thick sobs ensued, then a deep silence, a sigh or two, and among them one word breathed—"Reginald."

The next moment she was a corpse.

CHAPTER XIV.

Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely plucked, soon faded !
 Plucked in the bud, and faded in the spring !
 Bright orient pearl, alack ! too timely shaded !
 Fair creature killed too soon by death's sharp sting.

* * * *

Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good ;
 A shining gloss that fadeth suddenly :
 A flower that dies when first it 'gins to bud ;
 A brittle glass that's broken presently :
 A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower,
 Lost, faded, broken, dead within an hour.

SHAKESPEARE.

Pain and grief
 Are transitory things, no less than joy ;
 And though they leave us not the men we were,
 Still, they do leave us.

TAYLOR.

So Leyton was changed in a few hours
 into a house of mourning. There is some-
 thing in extreme beauty, which, as we

rarely encounter it, so we pardon to its influence a thousand faults which we register exactly against those who are ungifted with this all-powerful charm. This is an injustice; but the even-handed goddess has very few followers in this world, and most people spend their whole lives in giving and receiving wrongs of such intangible nature. There was not a person in the whole house, who did not sincerely grieve for Isabel. The maids wept like river gods. The men looked sulky, which is English for sorry in that sex. The house was darkened, the beautiful corpse laid out; people stole along with that awe in their footsteps which death ever inspires. Constance was in her own boudoir really ill, Mrs. D'Oyley sitting with her, Mrs. Agatha down stairs making tea, Mary and Lord Bevis were sad and silent. Captain Bohun had gone home, and had then come back again with Sir Reginald, who could not possibly rest without hearing the whole account from Mary.

He had a great deal to say about its being a horrible occurrence, and a very remarkable fact, mingled with some confused remarks respecting Providence, which tended to say, as nearly as Mary could judge, that, as Providence had seen fit to remove Mrs. Forde, nobody ought to be at all more sorry about it than they could possibly help.

A convenient doctrine is this, and very commonly in people's mouths when the subject under consideration does not immediately affect them, and when they have a very great personal dislike to dejected faces; so Sir Reginald stirred his tea; and thought that in this instance Providence knew best. But conversation lagged, the shadow was upon them all; nobody attempted to break the heavy silence, until Miss D'Oyley's maid whispered to Captain Bohun that her mistress would be glad to see him.

Constance had persuaded her mother to go to bed, and was alone when he came in.

“ I am so glad you are come,” she said. “ Papa, I know, will be up presently ; now be quick and take me to see Isabel.”

He endeavoured to convince her that it would be unwise, unfit, in her agitated state ; that Mr. D'Oyley would disapprove it, and Mrs. D'Oyley throw the blame on him for yielding to her fancies. But she got up and looked for a shawl, and said she had made up her mind.

“ I should not like to go alone,” she said, “ and I know you will not refuse me. It all seems now like some uneasy dream ; and unless I see her again I shall never believe it. I shall always be oppressed with a restless doubt of her being really gone. Only let us make haste before papa comes.”

She was hardly able to walk, and he almost carried her to the door of the chamber. They entered. The first thing that met her eyes was Isabel's favourite marble basin heaped with the flowers she had gathered that very morning, in her

health and strength. She was glad of the respite—the moment's pause which the sight afforded her. Captain Bohun uncovered the face, and turned aside with an agitation he could not repress from the silent features. Constance sank on her knees. It was the first time she had ever looked upon the dead. How awful ! how unimaginable ! How many fearful dreams, how many fever fits had shadowed to her ghastly shapes that she thought dead, but all unlike the truth. She could not breathe as she looked upon it. She had heard death called beautiful. Yes—that calm heavy brow, and the white full eyelid, with the long curved lash that cast a black, fixed shadow on the cheek, these, even in their solemn stillness might be beautiful ; but the mouth—the lips were contracted, like withered rose leaves, and the white teeth, locked together, lay in sight. And no breath might ever more pass those portals—no sound uplift the curtain of that eye—no motion stir the rigid composure of those limbs !

looked smaller, find touch it, would not Bohun signed for her up; she shrank Everything sickened the flowers was waf and a fly hovered on hair. Her companion settled again, and the face was more shocked burst into a shriek at

Mrs. Agatha passed at her earnest entrance slept little and by night; the long silent lamp; the fevered thought that would

Mr. D'Oyley wrote to Lady Hernshaw the day after this fatal occurrence, and he never looked for any answer to his communication. He thought, in common with all the other friends of this lady, that she had entirely hardened her heart against her unhappy daughter; and that news of whatever kind that related to her, would be received with an equal degree of unconcern.

Three days afterwards the whole party were in the drawing-room, when Sir Reginald, who was standing at one of the windows, and wishing very much that it might be proper to tell the girls to come and play at bagatelle, and not distress themselves any longer about what could not be helped, startled them all, by calling out:

“Why, Constance, my love, here comes that extraordinary woman at last.”

“Lady Hernshaw?” said Constance, rising from her chair, and sinking down again as pale as death.

“The very same; and post haste, if one

may judge by her horses. I wonder what brings her here ?”

“ Shall I ring ?” said Mary, “ the servants have orders to admit no one.”

Mr. D'Oyley went to receive Lady Hershaw just as she was rushing up the hall steps. Her appearance was that of a distracted person ; her hair neglected, her eyes wild, her cheeks pale and sunken. She caught hold of both his hands, and hurried with him into the house.

“ Good God ! Mr. D'Oyley,” she exclaimed, “ is this true ?—this awful, shocking event ! It cannot be. You meant to alarm me,—to awaken my feelings,—to induce me to receive her at last. I will indeed ! I'll take her home with me now. I came here on purpose !”

Mr. D'Oyley in vain attempted to explain ;—to interrupt her.

“ But she is seriously hurt !” she continued, “ something has happened. I can't describe what I felt on receiving your letter. It was terrible !—beyond all words. Let

me see her!—Let me see my child! No, no!—don't say it!—She is so young to die! She cannot—cannot—”

It was a relief to Mr. D'Oyley that she burst into an hysterical fit of weeping. He said all he could to soothe her; but how console a woman who had acted such a part! She changed at once into a storm of the most passionate upbraidings against herself. All the errors of her beloved daughter might be traced to her own mismanagement. She had been the wretched cause of all; and in resenting Isabel's faults, she had but resented her own guilty work. And then she burst into another bitter flood of tears, clasped her hands, called herself the most miserable of mothers, and entreated Mr. D'Oyley to lead her directly to the remains of her poor child.

Then followed a scene of frantic excitement. She fell over the threshold in a paroxysm of hysterics, and it was some time before she was able to proceed. She

uttered the most earnest appeals to Heaven, threw herself upon the coffin, called to her dear child, her beloved Isabel; entreated her forgiveness, and in the same breath upbraided her own cruelty. In fact, she underwent all the agonies of an awakened remorse. It was a shocking scene!—terrible as being the display of a grief for which there was no remedy, and shocking as a contrast between her frenzied adjurations and the awful stillness of the insensible image before her. Mr. D'Oyley was truly glad when she suffered herself to be led from the room. She insisted on removing the body of her daughter to her own home, that it might be interred in the family vault; and her servants immediately proceeded to H— to give the needful directions. In the meantime she declined seeing any member of the family except Mr. D'Oyley, whom she requested to read to her out of the Bible, and then remained in a room by herself with a very large

prayer-book, which she did not read, laid open on a table with a pair of waxlights, which she imagined, in common with many coarse-minded people, possessed some peculiar charm in time of sorrow. Singular, that in health and quiet, these people never have recourse to these good books, and that in sorrow or sickness they attach so much importance to the mere volume, as if the age of spells and talismans were not past !

In the mean time Mr. D'Oyley returned to the drawing-room, and mentioned that Lady Hernshaw wished to be alone, which Constance was rejoiced to hear, for she had a very great dread of encountering her Ladyship ; and likewise that she intended removing her daughter, which news cost Constance some tears, while Sir Reginald could not conceal his satisfaction. It was highly proper ; very good taste on the part of Lady Hernshaw, and so on..

The next morning, Constance was

awakened by a stir in the house, which convinced her that they were removing her poor friend. She went to her window which looked into the court-yard, and there was the hearse standing just beneath, and Lady Henshaw's carriage in waiting behind.

The grey dawn was stealing in thin lines along the horizon; it had rained in the night, and every thing looked cold and cheerless. It was better than sunshine; it was in harmony with the dreary journey on which they were going,—the mother and daughter!

Mr. D'Oyley and Lord Bevis came and stood at the door, while the coffin was carried to the hearse; and then Mr. D'Oyley went in and returned with Lady Henshaw weeping and hanging on his arm. Her head was stooped, so that Constance did not see her features. She clasped her hands together in answer to some remark of Mr. D'Oyley's, and then turned and

gave her hand to Lord Bevis, while she seemed trying to speak ; but her voice was choked, and throwing herself into a corner of her carriage, the dreary, slow procession began.

* * * *

And Lady Hernshaw, after a proper pause given to her unexampled griefs, as she called them, mingled in the world again as freely as before ; but she had grown many years older in a short space of time. Her health had received a shock, as well as her appearance. It was not so easy as it used to be to manage her hair, and to paint down her wrinkles ; her voice was altered, and everything became a fatigue to her. Every body, except herself, ascribed these changes to the awful death of Mrs. Forde ; but she went from one doctor, and from one *system* to another, and wondered that nothing could bring her back to what she was before. She had bought experience too, at the usual

price ; at the price of much sharp suffering, much regret, much shame, and much of that physical wear and unrest, which ever keeps pace with the education of the soul. She had gained experience too at the usual time :—when it could not be of the slightest use to her, or any other human being. All she had learned from her great trial was,—how falsely she had brought up her child, and how wicked she had resented her own work !

And she had no other daughter !

CHAPTER XV.

Sorrows are changed to bride-songs—so they thrive,
Whom fate in spite of storms hath kept alive.

FORD.

All prepare
For revels and disport: the joys of Hymen
Like Phœbus in his lustre, put to flight
All mists of dulness, crown the hours with gladness;
No sounds, but music; no discourse, but mirth.

IBID.

Yet men who give
A living daughter to the fickle will
Of a capricious bridegroom, laugh—the madmen!
Laugh at the jocund bridal feast, and weep
When the fair corse is laid in blessed rest,
Deep, deep, in mother earth.

MISS MITFORD.

THE marriages were delayed for six weeks, during which time Constance wore mourning for her friend. No arguments or persuasion could induce her to shorten

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ly; and then told him that he was the dearest father in the world, except her real father; but that all that was quite settled, and could not be changed, and that Mr. Bohun was quite of her way of thinking; (here she made several signs aside to Mr. Bohun, which seemed to imply that he had better not contradict her); and that really it was rather too bad of the spectators to be in such a hurry, when the principals were taking it so very amiably and quietly.

So all that Sir Reginald was able to achieve by his eloquence, was, that the six weeks should date from the day of the accident; and as soon as that was distinctly understood and agreed upon, he became more comfortable. He did not know but that she might have chosen to count from the day of the funeral. However, there was one comfort,—it was impossible to say how many things there were to be done and settled beforehand. The more time there was, the more there seemed

to be done. As the day drew near, both houses were filled with guests. There were two sets of bridesmaids, with fathers and mothers in proportion, and these were coming and going from one house to another all day long; and sight-seeing and dinner-parties kept all gay and employed. Then Mr. Eustace Hilton came down with his father; and it is indeed untold what an addition he was to the party. Perhaps the marriage of Constance would not have been of sufficient interest to entice him to Leyton; but his sister was going to make a very good connexion; quite to give him a lift, making him brother-in-law to an Earl, and he thought it quite needful to grace the ceremony with his presence.

He was very useful, driving or riding with the six bridesmaids, and Lord Bevis was exceedingly entertained with him. He had never chanced to come in contact with a very common mind before;—he had scarcely exchanged three sentences with Sir Morgan, during that gentleman's as-

siduities ; and as every thing in society wore to him the gloss of novelty, he was much amused by hearing Eustace talk. Not having been ever possessed of an idea of his own, he was an excellent standard of the way in which most men think, speak, and feel ; because it would have been impossible for him to perform these transactions in a way at all different from his neighbours. Thus, he thought his sister's match a very good thing, and Mrs. Forde's death a shocking affair, and a bore besides. He thought Constance looked remarkably pretty in black, and Miss Blackwood, the handsomest of the bride-maids, was a splendid woman ;—and this exactly because other people said and thought so likewise. He would be sorry if his best pointer died, and glad if any horse won which he betted upon ; and without distinctly knowing it himself, he was very fond of his sister. Then, he spoke indistinctly, and dropped his R's, and used an artificial tone of voice,—infallible

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hearts, they were very well for people who required such things, she would much rather have an opera-box.

“ Yes,” said Constance to her cousin Mary, as the elegant Miss Blackwood was exhibiting to Eustace some of the gold and ivory trifles of her workbox, “ if poor Isabel had been as vulgar and as unfeeling as many girls, she would have accepted, without a sigh, the position her mother had provided for her. She was not bad enough, that was her fault !”

“ Yes,” said Mary, smiling, “ next to being good enough, to be bad enough is the best way to ensure the good opinion of the world.”

“ I think they had better marry,” said Constance ; “ it would cause such a sensation, would not it ?”

“ I have no objection, I am sure,” said Mary. “ Eustace has a right to expect a handsome wife for his money ; and this is a match that people would not laugh at ; far better than little Miss Meredith.”

"Could we not manage it?" asked Constance eagerly.

"Oh, it will manage itself," returned Mary, carelessly. "I heard the lady just now quoting Byron in support of a compliment she had just been paying to his eyes. You need not open yours, my dear Constance, such things are done now-a-days, and Eustace never could resist a little flattery: I dare say he begins to fancy himself deeply attached."

"But I want them to be married when we are," said Constance, "that would surprise everybody so much, it would be like the close of 'Much Ado About Nothing;' and I know Miss Alton would be bridesmaid if I were to ask her."

"What, next week, dear Constance? Impossible!"

"I don't see that; I'm sure stranger things happen every day."

"I don't know how people really managed in Shakespeare's time," said Mary, laughing; "but in a play of course it was

easy to lead the ladies to church on the spot ; while in these days, think of the long train of preparation, the dresses ; the fittings on and counsellings that have taken place only about your gowns ; besides the endless sheets of parchment, which cannot quite be got ready in a week."

" I don't care," said Constance ; " all that may be done afterwards. Here comes Mr. Bohun ; I am sure he will be of my way of thinking."

Mr. Bohun laughed, and said that the thing was impossible ; that it was very likely she might possess skill enough to engage them, and he thought that she might rest satisfied with that triumph. He reminded her, that if she could persuade the principal people to postpone settlements and trousseaus, it would not be easy to gain over Mr. Hilton and Mrs. Blackwood to so unusual a step. Oh yes, he allowed it would form the one romantic feature in the life of Eustace, and Constance was of course actuated by a bene-

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was nothing like beginning at once. She stepped through the glass doors, and joined him.

“ You have a long leave of absence, have not you, cousin ?” she began.

“ Two months,” said Eustace ; “ I wish it was a little later, because of hunting ; only, you see, Mary’s marriage ; and I shall get some good shooting at Hillsted.”

“ What a comfort that is, cousin ! Don’t you think Miss Blackwood a beautiful creature ?”

“ Yes, that is—I—she is very well connected, is she not ?”

“ First cousin to two Lords and one Baronet. I assure you I consider you a most fortunate person. Of course, it is very right to look confused ; but still it is easy to see—”

“ You always were so clever, Constance.”

“ Was I not ? Well, now how delightful it will be that you should be married on the same day with us, brother and

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"And the settler

"She has nothin

with anybody, how would you manage? You would not trouble your head about settlements?"

"Then I had better run away with her, hadn't I?"

"That is foolish, and wrong, besides; it is not creditable to run away with people. And would that, Sir, be the same thing as marrying on the same day with your sister?"

"No, true; but then, her dress?"

"Leave that to me."

"And I said I would be Bohun's bride-man."

"I will arrange that."

"And the old mother?"

"I will speak to her."

"And my governor?"

"Explain the matter to Mr. Hilton. Do you think, Sir, I am to have all the trouble?"

"I have not even a carriage."

"Uncle Hilton will lend you his, and go home by the railway."

"Then I'll
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one ; you shall wear a pinafore if I like it ! So don't let me hear one word against the H—— tailors."

" Well, I suppose I must," said Eustace. " I'll send my man to H—— to-night."

" I may speak to Mrs. Blackwood, then, before dinner ?"

" Do, please, Constance."

" Run into the hall, then ; Miss Blackwood will be there ; I see her fine head passing the staircase window."

" I will. She has a fine head," said Eustace, who knew as much about a fine head as he did of Sanscrit. He hurried into the hall ; Constance, still in her morning dress, darted upstairs to Mrs. Blackwood's dressing-room.

It was a good scene, though not a difficult one which she had to play. Mrs. Blackwood was a very worldly woman ; she knew Eustace to be a remarkably good match ; her daughter had beauty and connexions, the Hiltons great wealth ; and

they were of an old family, though Mr. Hilton was a banker. She received the news that Eustace adored her daughter, with a sigh and a smile ; talked of parting with her treasure as a natural occurrence, said she had always heard a very high character of Mr. E. Hilton, (she had never so much as heard his name before she came to Leyton) ; and hinted that she did not anticipate any opposition on the part of her daughter.

So far all was smooth. But when Constance, in her most caressing way, intimated that it was her cousin's fondest wish to be married on the same day as his sister, and she talked a great deal of nonsense too on the occasion ; ascribed to her dear cousin a great many feelings he would have been very much puzzled only to hear talked of ; and became quite eloquent on the fact of Mary and himself being the only two of the family, as if it was at once unusual and affecting for any one to possess so few children ; when, I say, this

part of her mission was announced, Mrs. Blackwood was indeed delighted with so amiable a trait in his character. But such extreme haste—the world would not like it, if even Camilla could be prevailed upon to yield to so beautiful a sentiment; and therefore, it could not be.

Constance paused a moment, and then drew nearer to Mrs. Blackwood.

“My dear Mrs. Blackwood,” said she, “Eustace is indeed a most amiable creature; the kindest heart, extremely beloved in his regiment, (his brother officers liked him and his dogs and horses well enough) but young men, you know—”

Mrs. Blackwood bent forward, all attention.

“The only fault he has, I do believe—he is rather changeable, that is all; and absence, you know—he leaves this part of the country after Mary’s marriage, and there is no saying—I have seen instances, much as he admires Miss Blackwood now—”

It was very true; what a sensible girl

Miss D'Oyley was ! It would not signify a straw about his being ever so changeable after he had married her Camilla ; the only danger was beforehand. Some people would have thought the changing had better come before than after, but not so Mrs. Blackwood. There was a cause—a show of reason in the unusual haste ; and sometimes the world took it into its head to relish a little bit of sentiment, and nobody would know exactly how long they had been acquainted. Yes, she would do what she could for Mr. Eustace, he might depend on it. So affectionate a disposition, she dared say he would ever regret it if he was not married with his dear sister. What a beautiful collar of pearls was that which he had presented to Miss Hilton ! She thought she heard the dinner bell ; perhaps they had better go down stairs.

Constance thought so too. She had made no toilet, but that never distressed her, and now she was in mourning it mattered less than ever. It was late in-

deed ! Mr. Bohun was waiting with her nosegay at the foot of the stairs, she took it, and replied to his question of how she got on, by desiring him not to be inquisitive, and to give Mrs. Blackwood his arm.

As they passed through the hall, Constance glanced to the oriel windows, and saw that Eustace had been making the best use of his time ; it was easy to read by the glow on Miss Blackwood's oval cheek, and the light of triumph kindled in her fine black eyes, that she felt she had gained a prize, a step in society, a tribute to her beauty—the hand of Mr. Eustace Hilton !

Constance managed to secure the chair on the other side of Eustace ; her mamma always took the head of the table, and she congratulated him on the progress he had made.

“ Yes ; she has no objection, only she thinks a week so very quick.”

“ Ah ! I shall have a little conversation with her in the course of the evening.”

“ And what does the old lady say ?”

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"So she is. But,
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“ He will say that you are a great deal more fortunate than you have any right to be.”

“ Not so fortunate as he is though !”

A pretty speech for a bridegroom.

“ Oh ! you mean on account of my property,” said Constance ; “ but to tell you the truth, we had both made up our minds before I had Leyton. Now don't speak any more, but sit thinking of what you mean to say to Mr. Hilton.”

Eustace obeyed her ; and the more willingly, as he felt he had something to think about. There was some difference between proposing to a young lady and coming to an understanding with his “ governor.”

Not being much of a diplomatist, he told his father he wanted to speak to him. Mr. Hilton, who was listening to a beautiful glee, merely told him that he might come to his room when the party broke up, and turned again to the piano, which delay

had the effect of making him so nervous, that when he did come to his father's dressing-room he did not know what to say, and threw down the fire-irons by way of beginning.

Mr. Hilton told him not to make that noise, and then sat down in an arm chair, looking very like a piece of wood. After a pause on both sides, it came into his head that his son was most probably in debt ; and as, to do him justice, he very seldom exceeded the munificent allowance his father made him, he looked as lenient as he could, and begged to know what was the matter.

As soon as his son disclosed to him his sudden attachment for Miss Blackwood, he said it was very well ; it was altogether a different thing from his affair with Miss Meredith. Here was a young woman whose appearance commanded respect, while her station in society made it at once advisable and pleasant to form such a connexion. He was glad to hear it : and now

he supposed Eustace would like to go to bed.

But when he heard that Eustace had made up his mind to marry this advisable young woman on the eventful Wednesday, he quite altered his tone, called Eustace a fool, and rang for his valet.

Eustace was not gifted with much power of persuasion ; he merely said that if he could not marry her on Wednesday, he would not have her at all ; that everybody else was quite willing, and that if the thing was ever to be, he did not know why it should not be immediately ; that, for his part, he did not see the use of waiting ; and that Miss Blackwood was the finest woman he had ever seen.

Mr. Hilton replied, that if he did not marry the lady in question, there would be no harm done ; that a young man of four and twenty could very well afford to wait a few years ; but that if he had such a particular fancy for that day and that lady, he had better marry at once ;—that

there was certainly something inconvenient and romantic in the proceeding ; but that, as these things seldom happened more than once in a person's life, such fancies were more excusable then, than at other times ; that he thought there was something in the air of Leyton ; for Constance had never turned romantic till she came there ; that he hoped Eustace would be very happy,—and he wished him good night.

Eustace was very much surprised and contented with this prompt acquiescence. It saved him the trouble of finding any more reasons ; which, as he had none at all to set out with, was rather convenient. He did not know that his father, who cared so little for Mary, was extravagantly and blindly fond of him ; and that Mr. Hilton, however easy he might have found it to deny any request of his by letter, was not proof against his most awkward attempts at persuasion.

He could not help stopping at his

cousin's door to give her notice of the success of his interview; and she desired him to go straight to Mr. Bohun, and beg him to recollect, that whenever she set her mind upon any thing, that was how she intended the affair to conclude.

Mr. Hilton having once acquiesced in the affair, proved himself of infinite use in its arrangement. He gave up his carriage as Constance had predicted; he came forward with funds; he made handsome presents to the beautiful *fiancée*; he expedited in a marvellous way the progress of her wardrobe, and showed himself in so amiable a light, that Constance told Mr. Bohun in confidence, that she hardly knew him to be the same person. But Mr. Hilton was in a remarkably good humour. Mary's marriage was in every sense an unexpected pleasure; and for his son's, he thought after all, now that he had fixed on so creditable an object, it was safer to take him at his word.

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to the other as she passed along, that Miss D'Oyley looked like an angel; and her beauty was so enhanced by the white drapery with which she was surrounded, that the comparison might have seemed just to a more critical spectator.

Miss Blackwood looked and moved a Juno. Her profusion of dark hair, her large flashing eyes, her glowing complexion, and unusual height, made her a very excellent representative of the imperious goddess. The poor people kept mistaking her very naturally for Miss Hilton, the young lady who was going to be a Countess.

"Are you frightened, Mary?" whispered Constance, as they were all crowded near the altar before the ceremony began.

"No," said Mary, turning her clear hazel eyes upon her cousin.

"And you, Camilla?"

"Oh! don't speak to me.—I am so nervous!" said Miss Blackwood, settling the folds of her dress.

Constance fancied herself the bravest of the party. She had made up her mind a long time, and she came here to say so ;—that was all.

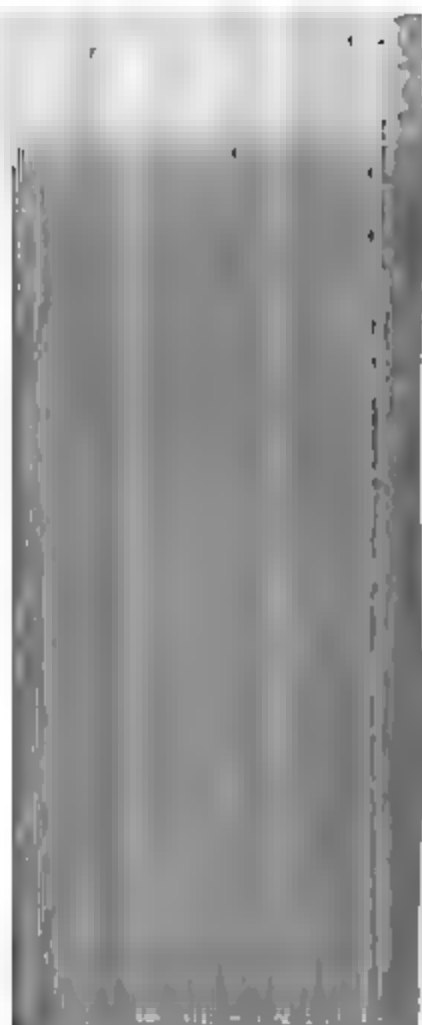
Mary's scarlet colour faded away inch by inch as the ceremony proceeded ; and Constance grew frightened from seeing every body else look grave, so that when she took Mr. Bohun's hand, she held it so fast, as if for protection against somebody else, that he could hardly get it away again. Miss Blackwood was by far the most composed. She whispered her responses, and wiped her eyes occasionally with her costly handkerchief, and used her silver-chased smelling-bottle whenever she could,—and really didn't mind it at all. She even remarked to Eustace after the ceremony with a pretty air of vexation, that she had inked her finger as she signed her name.

He stopped and pitied her, and then scrawled something which by courtesy was

allowed to pass in the register for "Eustace Hilton, his mark."

With regard to the gentlemen, Lord Bevis was earnest, Mr. Bohun tranquil, and Eustace, who was wishing for a cigar all the time, might be termed interesting. But fate, which has denied to Englishmen a costume at all worthy of a human being, has also decreed that they shall not shine to great advantage on any occasions of state and ceremony; they are not dramatic in the expression of their feelings, and therefore on an occasion like the present, everybody looks at the brides; every one feels that all the beauty and all the romance of the situation belongs to them.

And now the carriages drew up, the procession was arranged, the flower-girls strewed their scented blossoms, the curious groups in the churchyard pressed forward to catch a glimpse of the bridal party. Let us follow them. No, not be-



CONCLUSION.

I RECOLLECT a remark made by a reviewer upon the character of a critic in one of Mr. Ward's admirable novels, to the effect that he shrewdly suspected Mr. Ward had suffered annoyance from some recent criticism, or he would not have drawn so severe a portrait of a critic ; thus insinuating that the description must be received with a grain of salt, (the phrase is classical), by all discreet readers.

It would seem a little strange, now, if a member of the House were to say something in disparagement of pickpockets, and were to be answered in full by a confident assurance that he had had his own pocket picked. " Nothing else, Sir, could make

You have lost your case, or may be you and you come down pickpockets! Make goodly testimony! the matter, truly!"

Now, though it stands that ever but he who has it wise has always been and I am careful against the critics explain a little to kind enough to read what I have endeavored because I know by of these gentlemen very kindest intentions

It will be seen at once that the only two characters which pretend to more development than may belong to sketches are those of Constance and Isabel, and in these I have depicted, as I think, a fair specimen of the results of two kinds of education ; the one careful and conscientious—the other artificial and dishonest in every particular. The result is to be expected. It is not in the tranquil routine of daily life, that the great difference of such characters is to be detected by a common observer ; diseases of the mind, like those of the body, require something of a shock to bring them forward. It is, in a situation of difficulty and distress, that the one plunges from one falsehood to another, and at length seeks to extricate herself by an act of unmeasured treachery to her dearest friend. The integrity of the other, in a situation equally painful, leads her to the truest, the most beautiful source of consolation—the administering to the happiness of others. There is, however, one difference in the temperament of

these two women, which in a great degree influences both conduct and character. Constance is constitutionally courageous; Isabel is timid. So much has been said and is felt against any approach to masculine character in women, that to advocate any thing so gentlemanly and bravery will lay me open to much censure; but, (apart from a very sincere and acknowledged religious principle), I do not know any quality so likely to elevate a character above doing wrong, as courage; anything so truly indispensable to that quiet self-reliance and fastness in well-doing, which is surely essential to the weaker as to the more wilful sex. "For thereof comes all honour and all worth"—thereof comes the joy of truth, and that utter absence of selfishness which more than any other trait distinguishes a true woman. And I wish women would be convinced, when that delicate and sensitive cherishing of self is commended, that people are extolling a very bad specimen of a man, perhaps even

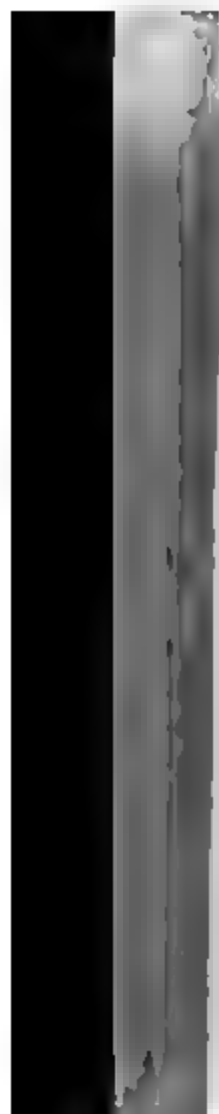
something removed as far as possible from that which should be the ornament or the characteristic of a feminine disposition.

And now to say a few words in extenuation of the faults which must be evident to all. In my opinion, one of the greatest faults of which a novel can be guilty is, to be dull; and in three volumes it is scarcely to be hoped that I shall not have often committed this fault. But in these days it is the fashion to write three volumes, neither more nor less—nobody can be out of the fashion; our thoughts or our words must cover so many sheets of paper, and therefore it is, that many a story is beaten out thin to meet the inexorable demands of the printer. A poor author must cudgel his brains if he mean to coin them, with the pleasing conviction ever before his eyes, that “your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating.”

If this hint of our necessities should serve to excuse some few of the deficiencies you

must needs encounter in the pages before you, ladies and gentlemen, I shall hold myself much indebted to your patience and courtesy.

THE NEW COMERS.



THE NEW COMERS.

“WELL, and what is she like?” asked Miss Smith, as she met Mrs. Brown coming out of the iron gates that led to Mrs. Alison’s house.

“Not at home!” replied Mrs. Brown settling the gold pins in her cuffs, with an air of great vexation.

“She never is at home. Do you think she denies herself on purpose?” asked Miss Smith.

“I don’t know; the man said she always drove out at this hour.”

“Now that is such an air,” returned

Miss Smith, "always to go out at a certain hour. And who are they?"

"Oh! Heaven knows! somebody said the husband was a green-grocer."

"Mr. Brook told me he was a wine-merchant," said Miss Smith; "but then Mr. Brook is such an old gossip."

"Hateful old man, so he is! There he goes to cheapen his daily mutton chop at the butcher's."

"How do you do, my dear Miss Mansel? Do you know any thing of these Alisons?"

"Not personally, my dear Mrs. Brown; they were out when we called. Mrs. Hartley told me she was a great beauty."

"What, Mrs. Alison! why was not that she at church with the ugly lilac bonnet?"

"It was Mrs. Alison at church," Miss Mansel said; "but she had not thought the lilac bonnet ugly; in fact she thought it decidedly the prettiest bonnet in the church; but she had not been able to obtain a glimpse of the face beneath."

“ Well then, my dear,” said Mrs. Brown with an air of triumph, “ I can tell you she is no beauty ; her mouth is too large. I never could see any beauty in a person with a large mouth.”

Mrs. Brown’s mouth was a little thin aperture, that would barely serve her to talk and eat with : but as she, in common with almost every one, had been called pretty at some time, and by somebody, she was greatly enraged when she heard any one called a beauty, and invariably gave her very earnest and decided negative to the proposition.

Miss Mansel had never been tried by too much praise ; she was honest and reserved, two very unpopular qualities. She was a great admirer of beauty in others, having none herself, and she said she was sorry to hear that Mrs. Alison was not beautiful : she had promised herself a great treat in seeing her. This reply put Mrs. Brown out of temper, as most straightforward replies do ; but Miss Smith stopped Miss Mansel

who was saying good bye, and asked if Mr. Alison was a wine merchant after all?

"No," Miss Mansel said, "he was in no way of business whatever."

"Then how did he live?" Mrs. Brown wondered.

"On his fortune," Miss Mansel thought.

Mrs. Brown believed he was, or had been, a green-grocer.

Miss Mansel said she had had her information from Mrs. Hartley who was intimate with all the Alison family.

"Oh! that disagreeable Mrs. Hartley!" was Mrs. Brown's rejoinder.

Miss Mansel thought that Mrs. Hartley's powers of attraction had nothing to do with the simple fact which she had stated; and as she liked Mrs. Hartley, she made no reply.

Mrs. Brown, still more angrily said she saw she was detaining Miss Mansel, and wished her good morning, and in the same breath asked her whither she was going in such a hurry.

Miss Mansel replied that she was going to call on the Hammonds, and that she was in haste, that her visit might be paid before their early dinner hour.

So she left Mrs. Brown highly enraged against her ; for whenever Mrs. Brown asked a question, it put her into a passion if the people did not make her exactly the reply she had framed in her own mind ; and she had wanted Miss Mansel to say that she was not in a hurry at all, and that she should like to have a little more conversation about these new comers.

“How stupid she grows !” exclaimed Mrs. Brown to Miss Smith. “She has no more manner than a housemaid.”

“Poor thing,” said Miss Smith, “she is very plain, certainly.”

“And pretending all that admiration for beauty, my dear Miss Smith ! Why you and I know that it is all because she affects to be fond of drawing heads.”

“And I don’t think it is quite proper,” faltered Miss Smith ; “because one is not

sure that it is strictly confined to our own sex, all this admiration."

"You are a sensible girl, Miss Smith," said Mrs. Brown.

The Hammonds liked Miss Mansel, and she showed to more advantage in their pleasant, frank society. Her face lighted up as she was shown into a morning room rather disordered with an appearance of lessons, with four fine girls of different ages lounging round the table. The eldest played at teaching the three younger ones, and was distinguished by a black silk apron tied over her pink frock instead of the holland pinafores of the others.

"Ah, ah! sister Theresa," cried one, starting from her chair, "here she comes, sister Theresa; and has she brought back the lace pattern she stole from me, the little thief!"

And all her long uncurled locks of light hair fell back like ribbons, as she hung round Miss Mansel's neck, and looked up in her face.

“Here it is, Fanny dear, let me go and speak to Grace. Gracy, lessons are all over now.”

“Do say lessons are over, now that Theresa is come,” said Lydia, tossing books and slates into a heap on the table.

“Oh ! thank goodness, yes ! lessons are over for to-day,” said Grace, pushing her share of the books towards the general heap. “I am as glad as any of you. Come and sit close by me, Theresa. How are all at home ?”

“All well, darling ! thank you ;” said Theresa to Adela the little silent one, the youngest of the four sisters, who had stolen to the window directly she saw Miss Mansel enter, and now brought her a fragrant cluster of jessamine. “How lovely she grows, yes, tell her so Gracy, what is the use of hiding it ? You are lovely, dear one.”

“Look at her, with her great earnest eyes,” said Lydia.

“How I like to hear you talk, Theresa,

seen Mrs. Alison
thing, persuaded
said they lived in
ours ; talked of
riages, and all that
this Mrs. Alison.

“ And how
Lydia. “ If I am
will dress exactly
shawl down to my
standing out all

“ And a low collar
such a pair of gloves
I make them go
she does ?”

“ And a good

shaved like that cross old dog of Mrs. Hartley's, but covered with long hair like a little muff. Oh ! I think I shall steal the poodle !”

“ I wish we were rich,” said Grace, laughing ; “ fancy our old chaise, which I always say will come in two when old grey Time begins to pull it along, and which even old Tom Happer is quite ashamed to bring round to the front door ; and yet if mamma had not that, she must walk, which would be very inconvenient when she wants to go shopping to R——.”

“ She is gone there to-day,” said little Adela softly, “ to buy me a straw bonnet.”

“ What would Mrs. Alison say, I wonder,” continued Grace still laughing, “ to our pink frocks, and coarse straw bonnets, or those dismal gowns we had for winter, which you allowed yourself, Theresa, were just the colour of gingerbread.”

“ Yes, I said so, but I thought them very neat, with your plain cuffs and collars,” said Miss Mansel.

"But only fancy us, with our belongings, visiting Mrs. Alison. I believe old Mrs. Brown was right after all," said Grace.

"Well, your comfort is," said Theresa, "that if she depends on carriages and Barèges shawls, you have escaped a very tiresome acquaintance."

"Perhaps she does not though," said Lydia. "See her riding on horseback with the wind catching her long dark ringlets, and blowing them back over the rim of her hat! She looks so bold with her proud aquiline nose. No, not bold exactly—I mean—I can't express it."

"I wish I had seen her," said Miss Mansel.

"My hair never will keep in curl," said Fanny, "isn't it tiresome? just look at all these obstinate strips."

"Band it, dear."

"What with my wide face? An Irish face is not it? Mamma has done that for us, we have all her Irish face."

“Here! Theresa, quick; here comes Mrs. Alison in her low carriage.”

“Stay, my little Adela, I’ll tie it for you in a moment, I must have one look at this beautiful Mrs. Alison.”

“Oh! Theresa, she is gone. Just turned the corner, what a pity!”

“She had on a black velvet mantle,” said Lydia.

“And a pair of yellow gloves,” said Fanny.

“And such a pretty bonnet,” cried Lydia.

“A fancy straw, with a purple feather,” echoed Fanny.

“And violets inside,” said Lydia.

“I wish I had such a one, I know,” remarked Fanny.

“That will do: don’t bore Theresa about the bonnet,” said Grace.

“Now I will tell you how many bonnets she has got,” said Lydia.

“As if you knew!” cried Grace; “come

here, Theresa, let me show you our new waltzes."

"My time is up; I must make haste home," said Theresa.

"No, no! stay and dine with us! we shall have dinner in two minutes!" said Grace.

"I can't really to-day."

"We won't let you go, sister Theresa," cried the others, "we have such a nice dinner to-day: chickens and—"

"Nonsense," said Grace, "Theresa does not care for the dinner; but she will stay."

"Can't indeed!"

"But your mamma has Agnes and Jane with her."

"Yes, but she wants me to write a letter before post-time."

"Can't Agnes do it?"

"No, my little Fanny.

"Well, come again soon, sister Theresa."

“Come to-morrow,” whispered little Adela, as she gave her a parting kiss.

The drawing-room at home was quite full when Miss Mansel returned. Of course the first name that met her ear was Mrs. Alison.

Somebody asked as usual, “Who are they?”

Theresa saw that Miss Grove had put the question ; and it set her thinking who was Miss Grove ? And so very little dignity was attached to the few forefathers that Miss Grove was ever known to possess, that she thought perhaps Miss Grove was less reasonable than many women might have been in the particularity of her inquiries. But Miss Grove was a great many years older than Miss Mansel, and therefore knew better. Perhaps she knew that to be exceedingly contemptuous towards other people, and extremely fastidious towards those who were abundantly qualified by birth and education to associate with her,

was a very excellent way to make people in general think that she was a very exalted personage. It is so natural to place you above those you despise.

Miss Mansel's younger brother used to call Miss Grove a humbug; but what could you expect of a boy who had hardly left school?

Miss Grove had seen Mrs. Alison, for she had been at home when that lady returned her call. "She did not take a drive at a stated hour every day." To be sure she had nothing to drive in, which might in some measure account for her not falling into that bad habit.

Miss Mansel immediately crossed over and sat down by Miss Grove. She confessed that she felt curious respecting Mrs. Alison. "Was she beautiful?"

"Oh! dear no, she might be called a fine woman."

"Was she fascinating in her manners?"

"Not at all." Miss Grove had not been at all struck with her manners.

“Perhaps her conversation was very attractive.”

“Not at all.” Miss Grove thought that Mrs. Alison aimed at being thought foreign.

Several ladies here exclaimed: “shocking!” and one feared that Mrs. Alison was a great flirt. One said that Mrs Alison sat all church time last Sunday, and had not been to church at all the Sunday before.

Another thought she looked dashing; and another remarked that her style of dress was preposterous in a quiet village like theirs.

Mrs. Harding, drawing up one side of her mouth, said she wondered at their coming into a place without introductions.

Miss Mansel said, that they were intimate with the Hartleys.

“Yes, but then the Hartleys,” said Mrs. Harding with her well-known expression of mouth, “they are not quite all the neighbourhood.”

"Only that as we all know the Hartleys, it might serve as an introduction to us," said Theresa quietly.

"I don't know, I am sure," said Mrs. Harding.

She was getting angry in her turn. Poor Theresa, without knowing it, generally contrived to make somebody angry. She thought that by explaining what she said she made her meaning clearer ; they thanked her for nothing,—by that means she was constantly giving check-mate to all their fault-finding.

"And when did you call, pray?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"On Monday."

"And this is Friday, two days I believe, after the prescribed time for returning first visits. Those who like such airs may put up with them. I am glad I never called."

"Mrs. Alison is often an invalid," said Theresa, "and that may easily account for the delay."

"I dare say," said Mrs. Harding ironically.

Theresa was growing weary. What had poor Mrs. Alison done, she wondered, to all these people. She got up, said that she was pledged to write a letter by post time, and shut herself in her own room.

It never came into her head that because Mrs. Alison was young, rich, and beautiful, every one felt as if she had done them some great personal injury. She thought, that in spite of these singular advantages, she must have something disagreeable about her, which none of these ladies could overlook.

In about an hour's time, her sister Jane knocked at her door.

"Oh! Theresa," she said, "do you know, Mrs. Alison has just called. Mamma was out, so she sent in her card, *et voilà*."

She threw one down before her sister, which contained a few words written in pencil.

It was a request that the young ladies would drink tea with her, that evening, without ceremony, as she had not been fortunate enough to find them at home.

“Let us go by all means,” said Theresa. “I was beginning to fear I should never see this beautiful Mrs. Alison. I would not lose the opportunity for a world ; I am sure I shall like her.”

It was a summer evening, and as the Mansels drove up to Mrs. Alison’s door, the sound of music came through the open-curtained windows. It was a delicious voice, peculiar in its wild sweetness. Mrs. Alison was singing. She rose from the piano ; came through two or three gentlemen who were clustered round her, and greeted the sisters.

“It is so very kind of you to come up to see me in this unceremonious way.”

Theresa was astonished—her beauty was dazzling—it was of that kind of which Shakspeare must have dreamed of, or have seen when he wrote those beautiful lines :

When, in the chronicle of wasted time,
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights;
Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express'd
Even such a beauty as you master now.

Mrs Alison was very tall, of that slender and graceful structure which poets are apt to attribute to Diana. Her slender throat carried her head up from her shoulders, with that peculiar air of delicacy and wild grace, that may be seen perhaps in the partridge as much as in any thing—that inimitably shy and startled expression, which brings the tiny head into a thousand new positions each more elegant than the last. Her complexion was splendid—her hair had the gloss and texture of an infant's—her large grey eyes sparkled like jewels beneath their long black fringes, and there was a force and precision in the sharp lines of the nose and the slight curved lip, that gave perfection at once to the outline and

the detail of the face. And then what a cheek—what a chin—what a forehead in its clear wide ivory surface—what eyebrows lined, and almost painted upon the pure skin ! Her beauty was perfectly amazing—when she spoke—when she listened—when she was silent—there was no end to its change : as she threw herself into a corner of the sofa and began to talk to Theresa of the village, the books on the table—the flowers—her pet birds—in every new posture, every new inflexion of her bewitching voice there seemed a separate charm.

And her mind seemed as fresh, as bright, as highly finished as her person. She could touch on nothing that she did not adorn ; she seemed familiar with every passing topic ; and to each she gave a novelty and a grace that showed she possessed no ordinary intellect. She was not learned ; but where was the use of learning to a creature who possessed more power, by the free gift of nature, than others can acquire by a life's laborious toil ? People

(that is to say, Lord Bacon) once said that knowledge is power, so it was when it was scarce ; but when things become plentiful they lose all their charm.

Beauty, such as her's, must ever be most scarce, and it is almost the only sceptre left on earth. Theresa wondered again and again, that every one had not been as much astonished, as much enraptured as herself. She thought that such beauty, that such entire fascination, could have but one effect, could call forth but one voice of admiring praise. Really Theresa, though not grey-haired, was old enough to have known better ; to have known that, in the first place, common people cannot understand the higher orders of merit at all ; and that secondly, when they find out that it does exist, it is a source of annoyance and irritation, that it has been given to some one else instead of to them. When a very rich person is mentioned, people try to convince themselves and each other, that he is not half

and to pull her
it would be vain
to her's.

T









